NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

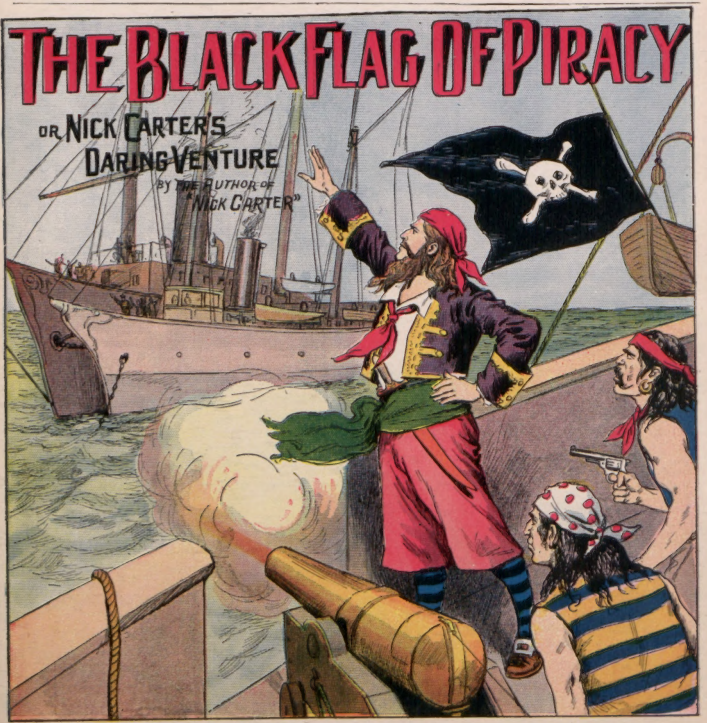
Issued Weekly. By subscription $2.50 per year. Entered as Second-class Matter at the N. Y. Post Office, by STREET & SMITH, 79-89 Seventh Ave., N. Y.

No. 497 NEW YORK, JULY 7, 1906. Price, Five Cents

THE BLACK FLAG OF PIRACY

OR, NICK CARTER'S DARING VENTURE

BY THE AUTHOR OF "NICK CARTER"



A black flag of piracy was flying from the ship that Nick commanded. "Ahoy, there," the detective shouted. "Lower away a boat and send your officers aboard of us or I will sink you."

NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

Issued Weekly. By subscription $2.50 per year. Entered as Second-class Matter at the N. Y. Post Office, by STREET & SMITH, *79-89 Seventh Avenue, N. Y. Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1906, in the Office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C.*

No. 497. NEW YORK, July 7, 1906. Price Five Cents.

THE BLACK FLAG OF PIRACY;

OR,

NICK CARTER'S DARING VENTURE.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

MYSTERIOUS SMUGGLERS.

Roger Conners, of the United States Secret Service, just arrived from Washington on a special mission from his chief, rapidly ascended the steps to the door of Nick Carter's home and pressed the electric button.

A moment later he was shaking the detective by the hand, and was at once led to the study on the second floor, where Nick glanced at his watch and then said smilingly:

"On time to the dot, Conners. It is exactly eleven o'clock. Help yourself to a cigar, make yourself comfortable, and then tell me all about it. Rather stormy out to-night, isn't it?"

"Stormy? It is quite plain that you haven't been out in it."

"To tell you the truth," said the detective, "I haven't been outside the house to-day. It has been a sort of day off with me, and I have utilized it in getting a lot of little odds and ends out of the way that have been awaiting just such an opportunity as this one. I received your wife about five; but I should have been at home, anyway."

"Well, I didn't know that. I had no idea of coming here at four o'clock this afternoon, and I took the five-o'clock train."

"What is it all about this time, Conners?"

"Smuggling," was the laconic reply.

"The smuggling of what? Diamonds, silks, opium—or Chinamen? Or what?"

"Pretty nearly everything, I imagine."

"Ocean smuggling, do you mean?"

"Yes."

"On the liners?"

"Well, that is just the question which we cannot cover at the present moment. However, it is my opinion that your question should be answered in the negative."

"You are not particularly explicit to-night, Conners."

"You haven't given me a chance yet, Nick."

"All right. Go ahead in your own way."

"Well, here is a plain statement of the case as we know it up to the present moment:

"We know that extensive smuggling operations are going on under our very noses; we know that it has been carried on for a considerable length of time; we know that it is done by wholesale, and that probably two or three million dollars' worth of goods have already been brought into the country by the smugglers; we know where a very small part of those goods have gone to—and that is all we do know about it."

"What sort of goods?"

"Every sort."

"Have you made any seizures at all?"

"Not one. Not yet."

"Why not?"

"The chief has thought that by keeping close tabs on what we have known about, it would eventually lead us to the bigger game. He wants to get at the root of the matter."

"Naturally. Has he had any success as yet?"

"Not even a suggestion of success. We are as much in the dark as we were the first day the knowledge came to the department that the smuggling operations were being carried on."

"But you say you do know where some of the smuggled goods have been disposed of?"

"Yes; a very small quantity."

"Hasn't it been worth while to round up the men who received the goods? Wouldn't they have something to tell you?"

"The chief thinks not. Of course, they are guilty of receiving and disposing of smuggled goods, and likewise, of course, they could be arrested and sent to prison for it; but what good would that do the department? It would not stop the smuggling. It would not give us the slightest clue to the identity of the smugglers. It would not benefit the government in the least."

"That is quite true."

"And so the chief has let them severely alone, hoping that sooner or later, by keeping a close watch on them, we would be led in the right direction to put a stop to the whole outfit."

"And that hasn't come to pass, eh?"

"It not only has not come to pass, but we are just as much in the dark as ever. We have not succeeded in obtaining the slightest clue to work upon. We know not one thing more than I have told you."

"And so you come to me."

"And so I apply to you, by direction of the chief."

"Who has had this matter specifically in charge thus far?" asked the detective.

"I have," replied Conners.

"I suppose, then, that it was your suggestion made to the chief, which led you to wire me to-day, and to come here to-night; eh?"

"Sure. He called me into his private office at three this afternoon and asked me what was new in the case, and I told him that the only thing new about it was another batch of smuggled goods which I was certain had arrived in the country, although I had no idea how they got here or just when they arrived. I told him then that I would like to engage you in the case with me, if he had no objections. He hadn't any, and so here I am."

"Have you kept pretty good watch of the big liners since you have known this business?"

"We surely have."

"And discovered nothing?"

"Not a thing."

"What is your private opinion about it, Conners?"

"I do not think that the goods or any part of them are brought over here on the liners. They arrive in too great quantities. They could not have been smuggled ashore after the arrival of the steamers, without discovery."

"How do they get here, then?"

"I suppose you want my honest opinion?"

"Sure."

"Understand that it is only a guess, made up out of whole cloth."

"All right."

"I think it is a private-yacht affair."

"Eh?"

"I think there is somebody somewhere, who is, or who has been, rich enough to support a private yacht—and I think that that somebody has gone extensively into the business of smuggling."

Nick Carter blew a column of smoke toward the ceiling, and replied:

"That isn't at all a bad idea; moreover, it is interesting. Have you done anything in the way of following up that idea?"

"Not a thing."

"I don't suppose you have even thought of obtaining a list of the registered private yachts, have you?"

"Sure, I have. I've got it with me, too."

"From what ports?"

"From all of them—on the east coast."

"Tell me how you obtained those lists, Conners."

"First, I wrote a letter to each of the big yacht-clubs——"

"I feared that you might have done that," the detective interrupted.

"Eh? Why?"

"Because, if your theory should happen to be the correct one, you have already given the smuggler warning that you suspect his methods. Clubs—and particularly yacht-clubs—are like families, and the secretary is the old-maid aunt of the family—the one member who is forever on the lookout for a bit of gossip, and who dispenses it with a free hand whenever it appears. You have sent your letters, in each instance, to the secretary of the club, I suppose?"

"Sure."

"Well, there are the Seawanaka, Corinthian, Atlantic, American, New York, Rhode Island, Philadelphia—there is no use in naming them over, one by one, for, I suppose, there are really hundreds of them, aren't there?"

"Yes."

"Well, let us suppose that your theory is correct. Let us further suppose that your private-yacht smuggler is a member of the New York, or of the Seawanaka, or of the Atlantic. You can bank on the fact that in that case he is already posted concerning what you are doing, and therefore he will take mighty good care to blind you all he can."

"You are right, Nick. I ought not to have been so precipitate," said Conners.

"He might even go out of business for a time—until your suspicions are allayed."

"That is true, too."

"I am afraid, Conners, that you have put a stumbling-block in your own way."

"It looks as if I had done that very thing, Nick."

"Well, there is no use in arguing that any further, or in crying over spilt milk. What have you done with the lists since you received them from the various clubs?"

"I think I have gone over them about a hundred times."

"Well?"

"I have scratched out the names of yachts and owners who were totally out of the question."

"Of course."

"I have tried to boil the thing down to a few against whom there could be an excuse for the shadow of suspicion."

"And how many such have you found?"

"I haven't found any; but——"

"But what?"

"There are a lot of names that I haven't scratched out, for the simple reason that I do not know anything about them—and then, of course, there are a lot of clubs where the entire list of the names of owners is unknown to me."

The detective laughed lightly. Then he said:

"In short, Conners, so far as you have been able, you have divided your lists into two classes—what we might call the eligibles and the ineligibles; the men who might possibly do some smuggling, and the men who would never think of such a thing. That is the idea, isn't it?"

"That is about it; yes."

"For instance, you would not hesitate to scratch out the name of J. P. Morgan, or E. C. Benedict, or the Goulds, or the Vanderbilts, and so forth."

"Hardly."

"They would be included under the head of ineligibles. Now let me see your lists of the yacht-clubs that are close around New York. I would like to look over the names of those eligibles. It might be that I know some of them better than you do."

CHAPTER II.

THE FOUR SUSPECTS.

Rogers Conners passed the lists to the detective in utter silence, and the latter received them as quietly.

For a long time after that not a word was spoken between the two men, for Nick Carter's entire attention was absorbed by his occupation, and pencil in hand he viséd the lists that Conners had given him, from top to bottom.

After a long interval, he returned the papers to the secret service officer, with the remark:

"I think we will clean up around New York before we bother with any of the other clubs."

"Yes," replied Conners. "I think that would be the best way."

"If you will glance over those lists, you will see that I have marked letters against the names, as I went through them."

"I see."

"I have used only four letters—A, B, C, and D. We will investigate the ones I have marked with A first; after that we will go to B; then to C; and then to D."

"I understand."

"Now, in all those lists—I mean among all the names on those lists—there are three that I have marked with A's. Do you notice them?"

"Yes."

"Those are names of men who I believe will bear special investigation."

"That is narrowing the thing down to a small compass at once, isn't it?"

"Well; it happens that I know something about the career and history of one of those men and that I have heard considerable about the others."

"Oh!"

"You must not misunderstand me. I know nothing that is directly against any of them. I do not know of a reflection upon the honesty of any one of them; but I have grouped them under the head of eligibles because I believe that I have reason to think that any one of them might be driven to do this very sort of thing so long as there was a reasonable supposition that they never would be caught at it."

"I see."

"We will take the first one there that I have marked with a double A."

"Yes."

"Stanhope Murray."

"Yes."

"Stanhope Murray went broke about two years ago—

at least, it was generally supposed that he had done so. He had been plunging in Wall Street, rather hard, and he got up against the game in such a manner that some of the old birds down there plucked him. I remember that it was said at the time that he hadn't a 'feather' left."

"And that meant—what?"

"It meant that his credit was gone as well as his bank-account."

"What happened to him then?"

"He left the Street as suddenly as he had gone into it. For awhile he disappeared; and then, after a time, he bobbed up serenely again in his old set, and outwardly, at least, was the same as he had ever been."

"Go on. I think I see what you are getting at."

"Formerly he had been something more than a millionaire—two or three millions, possibly. He had supported a stable, and a fine yacht—the *Pegasus*."

"Yes?"

"When he went broke, he sold his stable outright. He also sold—or appeared to do so—everything else that he possessed, *except his yacht*."

"He kept the yacht, eh?"

"He managed to do so somehow. I don't recall now just how he managed it, but I think there was some question about his title to her; I think that one of his friends had a bill of sale of her that was dated before the time of the crash, and of course the creditors could not go behind that."

"No."

"I think also, if my recollection serves me, that there was some talk at the time which suggested that that transaction was not exactly on the square. But the point is that he managed to retain possession of the *Pegasus*."

"I see."

"Now, at the time he disappeared, he left a lot of debts behind him. They were not so very great in amount, from his standpoint, and the standpoint of the 'Street,' but the point was that he could not pay them, and he disappeared without doing so."

"Exactly."

"The whole thing amounted to less than two hundred thousand, I think. He was gone from New York and from his old haunts about a year. Then he returned."

"And did what?"

"Paid his debts in cash," said Nick slowly, but with emphasis.

"Then I don't see why in the world you have marked a double A against his name."

"I'll tell you in a moment. He returned and paid his debts in cash. Then he adopted the simple life—outwardly. He kept away from the Street. He even declined to play poker, and formerly he had been a devotee of the round, green table. He took to living at his club, and aboard of his yacht—and he kept his yacht in commission all the time. Do you follow me?"

"Sure."

"The point that I am coming to is this: Nobody knew, and nobody knows now, where he got the money with which he paid his debts, and where he gets the money with which to keep up that expensive yacht, and to live as he does. It is one of the society mysteries of New York. *He* is one of the social mysteries of the metropolis."

"You are interesting me in Stanhope Murray, Nick,"

"I haven't got through with him yet."

"Well?"

"The man who accepted the bill of sale of his yacht at the time he went broke, and the man who is still his closest friend in everything—they are as thick as flies around a honey-pot—is one Dan Hadley, and Dan Hadley is supposed to be very rich. How rich I do not know, but we will take measures to find out."

"Is Hadley's name in my list?"

"No. He is not a yacht owner. He doesn't have to be since he is all the time with Murray, and practically lives with him on the yacht when there is any cruising to do."

"I see."

"Dan Hadley is a Westerner. He comes, I think, from Montana. I know that he traveled through Europe once, several years ago, in a private car, and that everywhere he went he kept a placard nailed against the car, which read: 'Mr. Hadley, of Montana.'"

"That sounds sufficiently Western."

"Now, Conners, there isn't any doubt in my mind that Hadley staked Murray. There isn't any doubt in my mind that he accepted that bill of sale of the yacht, *after* the crash, and permitted it to be antedated—and from what I have seen of Hadley, and from what I know about him, there isn't any doubt whatever in my mind that he wouldn't do that sort of thing for anybody unless he had some mighty good reason for doing it."

"You mean that he is not the sort of man who would do it for mere kindness; eh?"

"I mean that he is the sort of man who would not be inclined to do it at all unless he saw some distinct advantage to himself in the act."

"And still I don't quite catch on to what you mean."

"I mean that I regard Hadley as a man who might concoct some such scheme as this one that is now puzzling your department, and that he saw in Murray's misfortunes his opportunity. That is as far as I dare go with the idea just at present."

"But what of the remaining two names against which you have marked the letter A?"

"They are Harry Russel and Jean Cadillac."

"Yes."

"I marked the letters against their names simply for

the reason that they, with the other two, make up a quartet which is almost inseparable."

"I see."

"Russel is comfortably well off. That is, he is supposed to have an income which is only just big enough to keep him in the set. He lives at the club; he spends very little money; he goes everywhere; he dresses well; he is a good story-teller; he is a sponger for his dinners because of his ability at entertaining; he is everything and anything that the company he is in happens to desire—and he is a crony with Murray and Hadley."

"And what of Cadillac?"

"Cadillac is a cousin of a certain Count Cadillac who came to this country some years ago to retrieve his fortunes by a rich marriage—and who failed. He was a real count all right, but he was a rascal and a villain for all that. He went wrong and was finally killed in a duel, on his own estates in France. I was present at the time."

"What has that to do with the present case?"

"It has this to do with it: There is a strain of outlawry in the Cadillac family. This Jean de Cadillac is, in a way, a sort of adventurer. Like Russel, he has a small income upon which he manages to exist. He is as shrewd as they make them; he is handsome; he is a favorite with the women; and lately, I have been told, he has taken to spending a great deal of money, and announces in explanation of the fact, that an inheritance—a small one he calls it—has fallen to him."

"Well?"

"He would be just the man to enter heart and soul into a plan of this sort—I refer to the regular organization of a gang of smugglers of course."

"Do you think that is what we are up against?"

"Oh, I don't know. I am only figuring out the idea that you originated yourself, when you procured those lists."

"Your idea is, then, that Murray, Hadley, Russel, and Cadillac are the smugglers I am after, and that the *Pegasus*——"

"Hold on, Conners. Not so fast. I merely said that those men would bear investigation."

"And that we would investigate them before we troubled ourselves with others; eh?"

"Yes."

"And we will leave the B's, C's, and D's alone until after we have gone through the A's."

"Precisely."

"Are these men in New York now?"

"I don't know. I haven't the least idea."

"And the *Pegasus*?"

"I had forgotten the existence of the yacht until your list called her to mind."

"But you picked her out at once as being the most likely craft in the outfit, for these purposes."

"Yes."

"And the four men who pass a great deal of their time aboard of her, as being the most likely persons to go into this sort of business."

"Yes; that is the most likely one I know anything about. There may be others who are a great deal more likely to enter upon a plan of this sort than they are—only I don't happen at the present moment to know of any."

"Then I suppose that we will begin to make inquiries about them the first thing to-morrow, won't we?"

"We won't wait till to-morrow to do that. What time is it?"

"Just midnight, exactly."

"Well, we will begin operations to-night. The one man in the city who can tell us all about them is without doubt at the club now, deep in the mysteries of poker. It is not too late. We will walk around there and have a chat with him."

"What club is it, Nick? I didn't notice—or, rather, you did not mention it."

"The Carpathian. I am a member. Come; I will take you around there and put you up for two weeks. I shouldn't wonder if we could pick up some information within the next hour, or so."

CHAPTER III.

NICK CARTER IS "DOUBLE STUMPED."

The Carpathian Club is not a yacht-club, although it affiliates closely with several of them. Most of its members are yachtsmen.

It is a very select club, too; also a very "rapid" one.

It was organized originally as an offshoot from several other clubs where the restrictions were rather severe for some of the members; these restrictions had been left out of the by-laws of the Carpathian.

It was half past twelve o'clock at night when Nick Carter and Roger Conners entered the club-house, and the rooms down-stairs were almost deserted.

True, there were some of the regular loungers about still, but the detective very quickly discovered that the man he sought was not among them.

He had not, however, expected to find him here; he was certain that he would be in one of the card-rooms up-stairs, but to make certain he asked at the desk if Mr. Sturtevant was in the club.

The reply was in the affirmative; and as he and Conners were mounting the stairs, Nick said to his companion:

"Jack Sturtevant, the man I am seeking, is one of the best fellows in the world, and his only faults are that he is enamored of the game of poker, and he is an inveterate gossip. It is safe to say that nothing is going on within the confines of his particular world that he

does not know all about—and he is always quite willing to tell his friends about it, too."

"That sort of disposition has its advantages."

"Yes; in this particular instance, anyhow."

He paused for a moment before the door of the room, and said:

"They may ask us to sit in the game. We will refuse this time."

Then he opened the door and entered the room.

Instantly he smiled with pleasure, and gave Conners a significant nudge, for he found that he had run upon an unexpected bit of luck.

There were six men in the room, and five of them were engaged in a game of poker, while the sixth was seated astride of a chair, with his arms resting across the back of it.

The five men engaged in the game were Sturtevant, Hadley, Russel, Cadillac, and a man named Percy, who has nothing to do with this story; the sixth man—the one who was not playing—was Stanhope Murray.

Everybody looked up when Nick Carter entered the room, and Stanhope called out a genial, "Hello, Carter! Sit in, won't you, for the next deal? Five aren't enough for a good game, and Murray won't play."

The others nodded a recognition, or murmured a faint "Howdydoo, Carter?"

The cards were at that moment being shuffled, so there was opportunity for introductions, and Nick presented Conners to them quietly.

"My friend, Mr. Conners, from Washington," he said. "Conners, Mr. Sturtevant, Mr. Hadley, Mr. Russel, Mr. Percy, Monsieur Cadillac, and Mr. Murray. No, thank you, Sturtevant," he added, "I won't play to-night."

"They are about through, anyhow," Murray informed them. "It was agreed when the game began that if I would wait for them they would stop at one o'clock. It is getting around pretty near to that now, isn't it?"

"Almost," said Nick.

"We are going to sail for Bar Harbor on the yacht in the morning," continued Murray, "and I want to get an early start. Would you and your friend like to go along, Carter?"

He asked the question with every appearance of sincerity, but all the same Nick Carter sensed a note in his voice which indicated that he really expected the invitation to be declined.

For a moment he hesitated in his reply.

It was in Nick's mind to accept the invitation; but he thought better of it.

"It is good of you to ask us," he said, then, "but the fact is that it will be impossible for me to get away just now. Some other time, Murray."

"Whenever you can, Carter. Always glad to have you along, you know."

The detective was well pleased to know that the game would soon come to an end, for then he would find the opportunity he desired to talk with Sturtevant; and he noticed with satisfaction that Murray was keeping close watch of the time, so that the game would be stopped as agreed.

And after awhile he closed his watch with a snap, and rose to his feet.

"One o'clock," he announced. "You fellows can play one more round of deals, and then I shall hold you to your promise."

"One round and a tiger, with the pot doubled," said Sturtevant.

"All right. One round and a tiger. No more."

And so the round and tiger were played, and then the chips were cashed in and the men rose from the table.

"Bar Harbor, eh?" Nick said to Murray, while these rounds were being played. "Shall you be long away, Murray?"

"No; we are just going for the sail. That is why I thought you might like to go with us. We will be back here in a week or ten days."

"If this rain and wind keep up, you won't be so anxious to sail in the morning, will you?"

"Oh, that will not interfere. I never remain in port on account of the weather. In fact, I like the sea best when it is in a rage."

"You are a great sailor, aren't you? The *Pegasus* earns her keep for you; eh?"

"You are right she does. The only place in the world where I feel perfectly at home is aboard my yacht. Really, Carter, you must take a cruise with me some time."

"I certainly will, Murray. I will make a point of accepting the very next time you give me an invitation."

"Done. Agreed."

Ten minutes later, the four cronies, as Nick Carter classed them, bade good night to those who remained in the room, and took their departure.

"How did the game go with you, Jack?" asked Nick of Sturtevant.

"I am out five hundred. Somehow, I always am out when I sit in with that bunch."

"Who won?"

"Russel was a winner, and so was Cadillac. Hello, Percy, are you going, too?"

"Yes. Good night."

And so Nick, and Conners, and Sturtevant were left alone together; and Nick continued the conversation already started about the game, as being well adapated to lead easily up to the questions he wished to ask.

"Do Cadillac and Russel always win when you lose?" he asked.

"Pretty generally. That's a queer outfit, anyhow, Carter."

"How so?"

"Why, they're as thick as paint, and Hadley is the only one in the bunch who has money. I sometimes wonder if he puts up for the lot. It is beyond my understanding."

Murray seems to have money these days, doesn't he?"

"Yes, he does; that's a fact. I wonder where the devil he gets it?"

"Did he ever buy his yacht back from Hadley?" asked the detective.

"Nobody knows. He seems to own her, all right. You heard what he said to you just now. And if Hadley still owns her, he never says a word about it to anybody."

"They are generally together, aren't they—those four?"

"Together? Lord! you couldn't separate them with a writ of habeas corpus—and that yacht business of theirs? They go off together on the strangest cruises, and at the queerest times. Now, let me ask you, what sane man with a yacht would think of starting out to sea, and rounding Cape Cod in a storm like this one, when everybody who knows a thing about sailing, is perfectly sure that the storm will be twice as bad to-morrow; eh? I ask you that, Carter."

"I cannot answer it, of course."

"And there isn't a stormier or a rougher run, with meaner seas, than the one you will find between here and Bar Harbor."

"Do they make such runs as this one often?" asked Nick.

"Oh, I don't know. Every once in awhile they start out together just in that way. Murray suddenly announces that he is going to sail. Then he asks Hadley if he will go. Hadley says, 'Sure, Mike!' Then he puts the same question to Russel, and Russel says, 'Cert!' Then he asks Cadillac, and Cadillac replies, *'Oui, mes-sieu; merci beaucoup;'* and there you are."

"And doesn't he often ask others, as he asked me, just now?"

"Not if he has the least idea that his invitation will be accepted. He knew mighty well that you would decline his invitation just now."

"Do you think so?"

"Sure of it."

"But why did he ask me, then?"

"Just for a blind."

"But why should he feel called upon to work a blind on me? And why should he ask me at all if he didn't want me along?"

"You can search me. I give it up."

"What do you suppose they do aboard that yacht, Jack?"

"Eh? What do they do? Honestly, I have never given it a thought; but now that you suggest it, it would not be a bad idea to find out, would it?"

"I don't know how you could find out, Sturtevant. Do you?"

"Gee whiz, Carter! wouldn't it be fun to stow one's self away aboard the *Pegasus* some one of these times; eh?"

"It might be fun for you. I don't think I would enjoy it."

"Oh, come now! you know that I wasn't speaking seriously. But, really, I wonder what those fellows are up to when they are afloat. You don't suppose that they are operating a sort of floating gambling-house, do you?"

"I should not suppose that any of them would go into a thing of that sort," replied the detective; but he spoke with an air that plainly invited further suggestions on the part of Sturtevant. "Who would there be with them to do the gambling? There wouldn't be much fun in it for them alone, and you say they never take anybody with them from the club."

"Well, the club isn't the only place in New York where there are men about who like to play cards, is it?"

"No; but do you know of their having company on the yacht?"

"No; I don't. But what in blazes do they do?"

"Give it up, Jack. What do you think about it?"

"I don't think. I don't know. But I'd bet a hundred right now that if you or I would be on board of that craft this time to-morrow, we would see something that would surprise us."

"What, for example?"

"How can I tell you what when I don't know? The point is that you can't convince me that they take these sails at the odd times when they do go, just for the delight of each other's society. I don't believe it, nohow."

"And they do go at odd times, do they?"

"Sure. And I have noticed that the idea always bursts onto them all of a sudden. It happens just as if Murray received a telegram from a sick friend and had to be there at the bedside quicker than you could say Yankee Doodle, no matter what the weather happens to be; and nine times out of ten that whole bunch goes along."

"About how often do these spasmodic voyages occur, Jack?" asked the detective, as if he felt no particular interest in the reply, but would still be pleased to hear about it.

"Oh, once a month; or once in six weeks, or two months. Sometimes it will be only two weeks between them. I say, Carter!"

"Well?"

"What has become of your big yacht—the *Nadja?*"

"She is down at Erie Basin, or near there."

"I'll double stump you to go right now and have your yacht fired up, and the three of us will follow the

Pegasus to sea in the morning. By Jove! that's the best idea I have had in a year. I'll double stump you. What do you say, eh?"

CHAPTER IV.

FOLLOWING AN OCEAN TRAIL.

The idea had not occurred to the detective at all, but the instant it was suggested by Jack Sturtevant, he saw how practical it might be made that they should go at once to the Erie Basin, fire up the *Nadja*, and thus be prepared in the morning to follow the *Pegasus* to sea.

"Why not?" he asked tentatively, turning to Conners.

"Why not, indeed?" was Conners' reply.

"Is it a go?" asked Sturtevant. "Say the word, and I'll be ready to accompany you in a jiffy."

"All right," replied the detective. "Consider the word said. We will go."

"Shall I ask anybody else?" asked Sturtevant.

"No; just we three. That will be enough."

"And we will start—how soon?"

"As soon as you can put on your hat and order a carriage."

"What's the matter with my auto? It has a cover, and my chauffeur is always on duty. He is used to being out nights."

"All right. Order it around."

As soon as they were seated together in the automobile and were speeding toward Brooklyn, Sturtevant ventured another remark.

"It wouldn't surprise me if we missed the *Pegasus*, after all," he said.

"Why so?" asked Conners.

"Because I think those fellows lied about the time they were to start. They would probably sail as soon as they get aboard."

"Even so," continued Conners, "we know their destination."

"Not by several mill sites, you don't! Mill sites and dam sites are about the same thing, aren't they?"

"I believe so; but why do you speak so positively?"

"Well, this isn't the first time that I have been devoured by curiosity about those fellows, and the last time they went off in this manner, I just wired to the place they were going. The result was that they didn't go there at all, although they swore that they had been there, when they returned."

"So you do not believe that they intended to go to Bar Harbor at all, eh?"

"No; I do not."

"What place should you guess to be their destination, then?"

"Mr. Conners, after much deliberation, consideration, examination, and investigation, I am reduced to the unpleasant alternative of giving it up."

"Are they usually absent about a week?" asked the detective.

"Yes; a week, ten days, two weeks. Somewhere about that."

"I wish you would tell me, Sturtevant," said Nick, after a lengthy pause, "exactly what you think about Hadley."

"I don't think about him any more than I can help. I don't like him."

"Why not?"

"Just because I don't. I can't get it out of my head that somehow he is a fraud."

"That is hardly fair unless you have some reason for thinking so."

"That is just the trouble, I haven't a reason in the world. I took an antipathy to him the first time I ever saw him; that is the only explanation I've got."

"What do you know about him?"

"Nothing."

"What? I thought you knew something about everybody connected with the club."

"Well, Hadley is an exception."

"Possibly that is the reason why you don't like him."

"Possibly."

"What is generally known about him?"

"Nothing. He manages to keep his affairs to himself so well that nobody knows a thing about him, save that he came from Montana and he calls that State his home."

"He is rich, isn't he?"

"He is supposed to be rich; yes."

"How much?"

"Nobody knows that, either."

"How much should you say he is worth, at a guess?"

"That isn't a fair question. I'm prejudiced."

"Nevertheless, answer it."

Sturtevant was silent for several moments before he replied. Then he said:

"Carter, I have seen that man coming out of pawnshops, twice."

"Do you mean by that, that he had been hocking his watch, or a diamond, or something in order to procure ready funds?"

"No. I watched for those signs. He had 'em all with him when I saw him a few hours later each time. It wasn't that."

"What, then?"

"I don't know. It struck me at the times I saw him, that he walked with the air of a man who owned the place."

Nick Carter started.

"What made you say that?" he asked quickly.

"I suppose because I don't like him. I was never in a pawn-shop but once in my life, and then I went to redeem an article that was pawned by a friend of mine who

didn't have the funds to redeem it himself. I suppose it is a natural thought that Hadley should go to one for the same reason; but, confound it, would he go to *two* for the same reason?"

"Still, you haven't answered my question about how much you think he is worth," said the detective.

"Well, I will say this: Hadley is always talking about stocks, and bonds, his investments, and forty-leven other things that are natural subjects of conversation for men of wealth; but all the same I have never known him to go near a safe-deposit vault, he never goes near the 'Street,' he keeps only one bank-account, and——"

"How do you know all that?"

"Because the fellow puzzles me and I have watched him. Look here, Carter, I know that I am called the gossip of the club, and I know that I am overburdened with curiosity. That is my vice, just as drink, or something else may be the failing of another man. But my curiosity has never done anybody any harm, and two or three times it has done the club a lot of good."

"I understand you, Jack."

"It interests me and entertains me to keep tabs on a fellow like Hadley, and I have done nothing else for the last year; with the result——"

"Well?"

"That I know exactly as much about him as I did a year ago."

The detective broke into a hearty laugh; but Sturtevant interrupted him.

"Hold on, Nick," he said. "It is no laughing matter."

"Why not?"

"Because that very fact is proof positive that there is something about him that *ought* to be found out."

"That sounds like a logical deduction."

"It is a logical deduction. Where a chap takes so confounded much pains to hide everything that concerns him, it is pretty good proof to my way of thinking that he has a whole lot to conceal."

"Where does Hadley live? What place does he call home?"

"You can search me. He lives at the club, aboard that yacht, and he also keeps rooms at the Hotel Mammoth—but I'll bet a five-spot that he isn't in his rooms at the hotel once a week. He has apartments somewhere uptown, too, although I never could succeed in finding out where they are."

"You certainly have endeavored to run him down, haven't you?"

"I certainly have.

"Well, let us turn for a moment to Russel. What do you know about him?"

"Oh, Russel is just a common da—just a sponge. He's a cold-blooded devil, too, at that."

"He hasn't any money, has he?"

"Lately he has seemed to have a lot of it."

"Is that so? Where does he get it?"

"I'm sure that I don't know—unless Hadley puts up for him. The whole amount of it is that it looks to me very much as if all four of them were in some sort of crooked business together, and that they go off on these trips just to have an opportunity to lay their plans. It wouldn't surprise me to discover that they are operating a burglary syndicate."

"You seem to be willing to attribute almost any sort of crime to them."

"Well, I don't want to be unjust, but if there isn't something crooked about that outfit I'll eat my hat—and I'd rather have a canvasback duck any time."

"No doubt about that. You put Cadillac in the same class with Russel, of course."

"Nay, nay, Pauline! Cadillac is an adventurer, pure and simple. He lives by his wits and he doesn't much care who guesses it. He is by long odds the smartest one in the lot, and although Murray seems to lead the bunch, it is always Cadillac who has the last say when it comes down to cases. I've noticed that. By the way, Nick, I wonder what they will have to say to one another when they discover that the *Nadja* is following them?"

"I don't think they will find it out."

"You don't? Why not? They know her as well as I do, don't they?"

"Yes; but I don't think that you would recognize her if you should see her out on the ocean, half a mile or a mile away."

"Why not?"

"I have only lately had her repainted. Her hull was white, if you remember."

"Sure."

"It is black now. I had the masts taken out of her, too."

"You don't say! By golly, but that's lucky! They will never dream who we are, will they?"

"I don't think so."

"Gee! what a storm this is! Do you suppose they will sail before morning?"

"It was you, Jack, who ventured the suggestion that they would do that very thing. I had not thought of it before, but now, since you suggested it, I should not be surprised if they did so."

"Then we stand a chance to lose them."

"I don't think so. They certainly won't go out through the Narrows to-night in the teeth of this gale, and if they go through Hell Gate and the Sound, we can overhaul them before they pass Block Island. The *Nadja* is a great deal faster than the *Pegasus*."

"There isn't anything afloat that can catch the *Nadja*, is there?"

"Nothing short of a torpedo-boat."

When they arrived at the yacht a few moments later,

they at once went aboard, and very soon thereafter everything aboard of her was filled with life and activity.

The captain and the crew were roused from their slumbers and told that if they worked rapidly and willingly and well, there would be something extra for each of them at the end of the month, and the result was that in a surprisingly short space of time smoke was belching from her funnels and steam was rapidly forming in her boilers.

It was then that Nick and Conners found an opportunity to have a few words together in private.

"Do you intend to tell Sturtevant what we suspect about the *Pegasus?*" asked Conners.

"Not at present, at any rate. Perhaps so, later."

"But you think, don't you, that we are on the right track?"

"Conners, I haven't the least doubt of it, as I feel now."

"And these trips they make to sea are—what do you think about them?"

"I think they go to sea to meet some other vessel which brings a cargo to them. I think they receive it at sea, or land somewhere to get it—and I think it quite possible that we may catch them in the act."

CHAPTER V.

SHADOWED AT SEA.

It was just three o'clock in the morning when the *Nadja* drew out into the tide and turned her bow toward the north; in a little more than an hour from that time Nick Carter realized that there would be daylight at hand.

He gave directions to his captain that they were to make at full speed for the Gate, pass through it, and then speed on to the eastward until he was ordered to slacken down; and in the meantime, if he discovered that he was overhauling any craft of the description of the *Pegasus*, he was to pass near enough to her to make sure of the identity.

Nick's captain was a man who had passed all his life as commander of private yachts, and the result was that he knew almost every yacht afloat by sight, and could recognize them as far away as they could be seen.

This had been his principal recommendation in the eyes of the detective, at the time he was engaged.

But they steamed through the Gate, passed Fort Schuyler and the Brother Islands and so worked their way out into the Sound without getting a glimpse of the other yacht, and when daylight came at last, they were reasonably certain that the *Pegasus* was not ahead of them.

"We got away first, all right," said Nick. "The thing to do now is to slow down and let her overtake and pass us."

The *Nadja* had not a sign upon her anywhere by which she could be identified.

Even the pennant of the yacht-club to which she belonged was brought down and stored away, and because of the change in her paint Nick felt no doubt that she would escape being recognized anywhere.

In the meantime, the storm had abated; the rain had ceased, and the wind had subsided, and everything promised a fair day.

The engines were slowed down so that the *Nadja* was making only about eight knots, and so they continued on their way eastward.

At five minutes past eight o'clock, just as Nick and his friends had finished breakfast, the captain came into the cabin.

"I think the *Pegasus* is coming, sir," he said; and Nick and the others hastened to the deck.

Sure enough, a few miles astern, they could see the approaching yacht, evidently running under forced draft and making all the speed she could muster.

Nick took the glass and studied her for some time; and when he put it down he said:

"That is the *Pegasus*, all right." Then he turned to the others and added:

"The thing for us to do now is to go below and remain there until she is well ahead of us. Do you think you can be content to do that, Sturtevant?"

"I'll confess that I'd a whole lot rather remain on deck," replied the club-man.

"All the same, you will have to go below with us. Come along. Captain, if you will follow after us I will give you your directions."

"All right, sir."

These directions, given as soon as they were in the cabin, were as follows:

"Captain, you are to let the *Pegasus* pass us, and you are yourself to keep out of sight so that you will not be recognized. If it is possible to avoid it, I don't wish them to know who we are."

"Very well, sir."

"After the *Pegasus* has passed, you are to keep her in sight, and never to lose her—but I want you to keep just as far astern of her as you dare to, without danger of losing her entirely. Do you understand what I mean?"

"Perfectly, sir."

"I want you to follow without appearing to do so."

"I understand."

"I don't wish the people aboard the *Pegasus* to suspect for a moment that we are after them."

"I think I can do it, sir."

"Very good. You will come to the cabin to report to me from time to time."

"Very well, sir. You don't happen to know, I suppose, what port they will be making for?"

"No; I haven't any idea whatever. I have been told

that they were going to Bar Harbor, but I have reason to believe that was not the truth."

The captain returned to the deck then, and our three friends seated themselves at the cribbage-board, to while away the time.

As hour after hour passed, the captain came to the cabin frequently to report.

He announced when the *Pegasus* was abeam of them.

"They have overhauled us, sir, and are just passing on the port side, about half a mile away from us," he said, at that time. "Her people are on the after deck, studying us through their glasses, but I am quite sure that they don't make us out."

"All right," replied Nick. "Don't let yourself be seen. They might know you."

"Yes, sir."

"What speed is the *Pegasus* making?"

"About fourteen knots, I make it, sir."

"And we are doing—what?"

"Eight, sir."

An hour later the captain appeared again.

"She is about four miles ahead of us now, sir," he said, then.

"Well, is that far enough?"

"No, sir, but I have been gradually increasing our own speed, and I mean to keep doing it."

"Oh, I see. You mean to do that so that the men aboard of her will not notice that we drop behind too rapidly, and therefore be surprised that they do not lose us altogether, later on. Is that it?"

"Yes, sir."

At the end of another hour he returned again.

"I think it would be quite safe for you to come on deck now, sir, if you care to do so," he said. "They haven't glasses sufficiently powerful to recognize any of you now. I am certain of that."

"All right. We will come up presently."

"The *Pegasus* was making between fourteen and fifteen knots when she passed us," continued the captain. "I know her like a book, and I know that is about the best she can do."

"And how have you increased your own speed?"

"We are doing about fourteen now, sir. I have figured that that will just about keep her in sight until dark. After that we can increase our speed and crawl up on her."

"Yes; if she doesn't alter her course as soon as night falls, and throw us off altogether," said Nick.

"Trust me, sir. I will look out for that."

When Nick and his companions ascended to the deck they could see the yacht they were pursuing, far in advance of them; and there was also so much other shipping in sight that Nick believed that unless the men on the *Pegasus* were paying particular attention to the *Nadja*, they would already have lost her, and would therefore not guess that they were being shadowed at sea.

And so the day wore itself away.

As the afternoon grew older and evening approached, Nick saw that his captain had figured correctly, and that at twilight the *Pegasus* was almost hull down ahead of them.

"And now, sir," the captain said to him, just at the edge of twilight, "if you will give me my head, sir, and let me use my own judgment, I will guarantee not only that we will not lose that craft, but that the men aboard of her will never suspect us of following them."

"All right, captain. Go ahead. You shall have full swing."

Two minutes later the *Nadja* was bounding through the swells like a deer, her speed just doubled from what it had been.

It seems almost, at such times, as if vessels at sea have reasoning powers. It seemed now as if the *Nadja* knew that the leash had been removed and that she was permitted to go.

"By Jove, Nick!" exclaimed Sturtevant, approaching him where he stood beside the captain, "there never was such another as this *Nadja* of yours. You never did tell me that story about how you happened to get her. I have heard two or three thrilling yarns about her, but I never believed any of them."

"She was a present to me," replied the detective. "An East India rajah gave her to me. I don't know whether you recall the time when the great Orloff ruby was stolen and taken to India, but that was the time when I got the *Nadja*."

"Yes; that is one of the stories I heard. You named her for a Hindu princess, didn't you?"

"Yes; a Hindu princess who is now the wife of a very quiet and staid Englishman. It is getting dark quite rapidly now, isn't it?"

"Sure. And as soon as it gets dark you will lose the *Pegasus;* you mark my words."

"The captain thinks not, Jack."

"Well, I hope he is right. My way would have been to have stuck close to her all the time. I don't see the object in allowing her to get so far ahead. You will lose her in the darkness, I am afraid."

"There will be lights to follow," said Nick.

"Suppose she doesn't show any lights?" asked Sturtevant.

"By Jove!" said Nick. "I hadn't thought of that."

"I had thought of it, sir," said the captain. "We are overhauling her very rapidly now, and it will never occur to them on board of her that this is the same yacht they passed this morning. They think we are slower than they are, and now we are going twice as fast as the *Pegasus* could possibly travel."

"Tell me what your plans are, captain," said Nick.

"I intend to creep up on her, sir, and pass her; but not near enough so they will see from her deck that we are the yacht they passed this morning."

"And then——"

"Then I shall run on about as far ahead as we are behind now, and—— I shall take some chances."

"How do you mean?"

"I will order all the lights out. We are not in the track of the big steamers. There will be very little, if any, danger."

The detective was silent a moment.

"All right," he said then. "I told you to run the thing yourself, and I meant it."

"Thank you, sir."

"There is one thing, captain. I should not be at all surprised if that suggestion of Mr. Sturtevant's proved to be correct."

"You mean about the lights?"

"Yes."

"Lights or no lights, sir, I won't lose her."

"Who will you trust to keep the lookout for you while you are having your dinner? It is almost time for it now," said the detective.

"I shall have my dinner right here where I am, sir," was the quiet reply. "I know that you wish to keep that vessel in sight, and I don't propose that you shall lose her. If you will take the glass, sir, and look ahead, you will find that you can see her quite plainly, now."

"Sure. We are overhauling her rapidly, aren't we?"

"Yes, sir; but nobody realizes just what the *Nadja* can do when you put her to it. Wait till I read the log and I'll tell you what we are making now."

He hurried aft, but returned after a few moments, and with a quiet smile on his face, said:

"Make a guess at it, sir."

"Nonsense! You tell me what it is."

"Thirty-three knots and a fraction over, sir. There isn't a thing afloat that can catch her on a long run. No, sirree!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE SMUGGLER YACHT CHANGES COLOR.

Once in awhile you will hear somebody tell about a smooth sea, but that, it should be understood, is merely a figure of expression, for the sea is never smooth.

A smooth sea is merely not a rough sea.

There are always billows; there are always waves.

But with the setting of the sun that night, the wind subsided; the storm had blown itself out, and the sea gradually became quiet until it as nearly approached a "smooth" sea as it ever does in that latitude.

Nevertheless, there were low-hanging clouds, as if the storm were reluctant to take its leave altogether.

The night was, in consequence, rather a dark one; but so rapidly did the *Nadja* overhaul the *Pegasus* that there was not a time when Nick's captain could not distinguish her outlines through his powerful night-glass.

One reason for that was that he knew where to look for her, and another was that he kept the glass constantly at his eyes, so that he never lost her at all.

If he had not known she was there, and if he had been looking at random for a vessel, it is doubtful if he could have discovered her; but as it was he was all the time sure of her and of where she was.

She showed no lights, as they had suspected would be the case; that is, she did not show any until the *Nadja* was close enough so those on board the *Pegasus* could hear the throbbing of her engines; they got out some lights mighty quick, then.

But the *Nadja* paid no attention to her whatever.

She dashed on past, at a distance of a quarter of a mile, and seemed to be going on her way away from the supposed smuggler.

Then the captain took up his position at the taffrail, where he still kept his glasses in position, watching the *Pegasus*, and he saw her lights disappear again as soon as the men aboard of her were satisfied that the vessel that had passed them in the darkness had gone.

And now the captain of the *Nadja* gradually did away with his own lights.

The word gradually is used advisedly, for he dimmed them little by little, and in such a manner as to give the impression that the *Nadja* was disappearing into a haze; and finally they went out altogether.

Then the *Nadja* was slowed down to something less than the actual speed of the *Pegasus*, so that the latter would gradually overtake her.

This sort of thing was continued until well into the night; until the *Pegasus* had drawn up near enough for the captain to distinguish her white outlines through the darkness.

And he watched her constantly, all the while satisfied that his own dark craft could not be seen from the decks of the *Pegasus*.

They were probably four miles apart when the captain saw that the other yacht had altered her course.

She had turned at an oblique angle to the southward so that she was now headed almost directly for the Bermudas.

He called out an order, and had his own helm put over until he was following the same course, and after that the vessels were practically sailing in parallel lines.

The detective, who was standing beside the captain at the time, remarked:

"It is a pretty certain thing that they have no idea of going to Bar Harbor, at least."

"Yes, sir. I should say now that they are headed for the Bermudas."

"All the same," said Nick, "I do not believe they intend to make port there."

"Why not, sir?"

"Well, if my suspicions concerning that yacht are correct, she wouldn't care to get into quite such close quarters as that. There isn't any way to make a landing at Bermuda, is there? unless you go inside the reefs at St. George, and then, either land there, or sail all the way around the island to Hamilton."

"That is the only way."

"I wonder——"

The detective paused in whatever it was he was about to say, for the captain had abruptly left him and hurried toward the waist of the ship.

There he paused long enough to give a quiet order to one of his officers, when he returned to the detective's side; and as he did so the engines of the *Nadja* ceased to revolve, and she gradually slackened headway.

"Hello!" exclaimed the detective. "What is that for, captain?"

"The *Pegasus* has stopped, sir. I thought we had better do the same."

"Are you sure that she has stopped?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you think that she has discovered us, and wants to let us go ahead?"

"No, sir; I don't think we have been sighted at all."

"What then?"

"It is impossible to say, sir. There may be something the matter with her engines, or it may be that the people aboard of her wish to do something that can be done best while she is comparatively motionless on the water; or, it may be that she has arrived at a point where she is to wait for some other vessel."

"I shouldn't wonder if that last idea of yours is true, captain," said Nick.

There was an interval of silence after that, and then Captain Parker said:

"I hope you won't think me inquisitive, sir, but if you would give me some idea why it is that you are pursuing that yacht, it may be that I can be of more assistance than I am under the present circumstances."

"Why, Parker, I haven't the least objection to telling you. You have been with me so much that I know you to be as close-mouthed as the best of them."

"Yes, sir."

"You, of course, know who Mr. Conners is?"

"Yes, sir. The secret-service officer who was with us when we captured the pirate of the *Oyster Bay*, wasn't it?"

"Well, captain, the government thinks that somebody around here is doing a good deal of wholesale smuggling, and Conners has been sent up here to investigate. He came to me, and we decided because of some things that were told us by Mr. Sturtevant, that the *Pegasus* and her owner, or owners, would bear watching."

"I understand, now, sir."

"We don't know a thing against any of them, but we wish to satisfy ourselves. I happened to discover that the *Pegasus* was to sail this morning, and I decided on the spot to follow her."

"Her conduct since that time seems to bear out your suspicions, sir."

"It does look that way. Let me have those glasses a moment, captain."

The detective took the night-glasses in his hand and brought them to bear on the dimly discernible and shadowy outlines of the *Pegasus*.

For a long time he remained motionless, watching her; and then, quietly, he passed the glasses back again to Captain Parker.

"I wish you would take another look at her and tell me what you suppose they are doing aboard of her," he said.

"They are certainly up to something," came the slow remark from the captain, after a long pause during which he kept the glasses tightly against his eyes.

"What do you make it out to be that they are doing?" asked Nick.

"They seem to be dropping something over her sides."

"That is what I thought. What do you suppose it can be?"

"I'm blowed if I know, sir. It is something dark-gray, sir?"

"And now you see it and now you don't, isn't that the idea?" asked Nick.

"Precisely, sir. Exactly."

"That was the way I made it out."

"We might steal up a little closer to them, sir," suggested the captain.

"No; I don't think that would be wise. Let me have those glasses again."

He took them in his possession once more and began another investigation.

Almost half an hour passed in utter silence between them, then, during which Nick never once removed the glasses from his eyes.

But at the end of that time he gave them to Parker again with the remark:

"I think now that I could make a very close guess about what they are at over there."

"Do you, sir? What is it?"

"Look for yourself and see if you can determine. I may be mistaken, you know."

The captain looked, and he continued to look for a long time; but at last he dropped the glasses and sighed.

"It is too big a one for me, sir," he said. "I give it up."

"Did you ever read the 'Red Rover,' by Cooper, captain?" asked Nick.

"No, sir. I never did."

"Well, in that story there is a very swift schooner which has the ability to change her color, like a chameleon."

"Do you mean the color of her hull, sir?"

"Yes."

"I don't see how she could do that, sir."

"It was done by using long strips of painted canvas that were made to fit along her sides and that were made fast by means of rings and lashings that were already in place, so that they were always ready for almost instant use."

"I begin to understand, sir."

"She had two or three suits of clothing of that sort. She could appear with a green hull to-day, with a red one to-morrow, with a black one the following day, and with a white one the day after that."

"And it was all done with strips of canvas, sir?"

"Yes; entirely. And given a comparatively smooth sea, she could make the change in a very short time."

"Do you mean to say that you think that is what is being done aboard the *Pegasus*, now?"

"That is precisely what I mean."

"She had a white hull when we lost sight of her."

"Yes; and she will have a gray one when we sight her in the morning. That is why she stopped her engines."

"I believe you are right, Mr. Carter," said the captain, using the glasses again.

"I am sure of it."

"But why should she do that?"

"I'll tell you why."

"Yes, sir."

"She has without doubt come out here to meet her confederate—another vessel of some description, which brings the smuggled goods to her which it is her duty to land, and dispose of. When she meets that other vessel, she will be a gray yacht, and if anybody should happen to describe her in New York later on—that is, if a passing steamer should sight the two of them while they are making the transfer of the goods, and should report the matter upon arrival in port, the yacht would be described as gray."

"Sure as you live, Mr. Carter."

"And, therefore, the *Pegasus* would never be suspected at all, for she is white."

"Well, now, sir, who would have thought of such a thing?"

"It is quite evident that Stanhope Murray has thought of it—Stanhope Murray, or one of his associates."

"And what do you think we had better do now, sir?"

"Precisely as we are doing. I want to see what the *Pegasus* does."

"She will probably start up again as soon as she has changed her clothes."

"Probably."

"And I don't think they will make the exchange with that other craft around this part of the sea, sir."

"Don't you? Where do you think it will be done?"

"Somewhere off the south shore of Bermuda, sir. That is a likely place, and there aren't many—— There she goes, sir. We'll be after her again, now."

CHAPTER VII.

SHROUDED IN THE MISTS.

Slowly the *Nadja* gathered headway. Slowly she forged ahead in pursuit of her prey—for it was true that now the detective regarded the *Pegasus* as legitimate prey.

The very fact that the men in charge of her should so alter her appearance while at sea that she would not be recognized from a distance, was proof positive in the detective's mind that he had not reckoned wrongly concerning her.

Then, as the night advanced and morning approached, a gentle breeze came out of the east; gentle, but objectionable, for it was laden with a fine mist which bade fair soon to envelope everything in its opaque shroud.

Fifteen minutes after that mist descended upon them, the *Pegasus* was entirely hidden from view.

"We are up against it now, for fair!" said Conners, approaching the captain and Nick across the deck. "We will lose her after all, won't we, Nick?"

The detective shook his head in doubt and turned to the captain.

"No, sir," said Parker. "I don't think we will lose her for the reason that I am fairly well satisfied in my own mind that I know exactly where she is headed for."

"How can you possibly know that?" asked Conners.

"Well, sir, I know these waters mighty well. I have sailed in them all my life. I know my way about here almost as well as you would know the streets of a city where you had always lived."

"Well?"

"To my way of thinking the *Pegasus* will head for Spanish Point, Bermuda. When she rounds that, I think she will keep on a few miles south of it, and if she has an appointment to meet another vessel, as Mr. Carter seems to think she has, I think that meeting will take place about there."

"Will you tell me why you select that particular place?" insisted Conners.

"For the reason that it would be just in a spot at sea where she would be least likely to be observed. They can find a point there which is just about twelve miles out of the so-called beaten track for any vessels. You are probably aware that at sea the horizon is exactly

thirteen miles away, from the deck of an ordinary vessel, aren't you?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, you see the force of my argument."

"I think I do, now. All the same we have certainly lost sight of the *Pegasus*."

"We will pick her up again soon after daylight to my way of thinking, sir," was the calm reply.

But the mist continued to thicken until it was nothing less than a bank of fog such as might have been encountered off the banks of Newfoundland; so thick was it that from the stern of the yacht objects at the bow were indistinct.

Then came daylight, and with it the speed of the yacht was increased until it seemed as if she were dashing along through the fog with frightful rapidity.

"I am taking chances, sir," said the captain to the detective, "but I wish to get to Spanish Point considerably before the *Pegasus* can do so."

"You are not using your fog-horn, either," said Nick.

"No. As I said, I am taking chances. Don't you think you had better turn in, sir, and get some rest?"

The detective shrugged his shoulders, and replied:

"No; I will remain on deck. How is it with you, Conners?"

"I think I will stay here with you. There is something uncanny about dashing through the mist in this way and not knowing whether the next minute is going to be your last or not."

"Where is Sturtevant?"

"Sound asleep."

But after an hour of pacing up and down in the mist until his clothing was soaked, the detective finally went below, and, having thrown himself upon one of the couches in the cabin, he was soon sleeping soundly.

And Conners followed his example.

Once, while Nick was resting, he was awakened by the sudden stopping of the engines, and he leaped to his feet and hurried on deck.

"What is the matter, Parker?" he asked, when he had found the captain.

"Listen, sir," was the reply.

Nick listened, and presently, from a considerable distance to windward, he heard the long, solemn blast of a steamer's whistle.

Then, after an interval of silence, there came another blast; then another, and another, and each time the sound seemed to be more distinct than before.

"It is coming this way," said Nick.

"Yes, sir."

"Do you think it is the *Pegasus?*"

"I am certain, sir, that it is not. I know the whistle of the *Pegasus*. I was aboard of her for one season before Mr. Murray bought her."

"Oh; you were?"

"Yes, sir. That is how I happen to know her so well."

"And you do not think that can be the *Pegasus* we hear, eh?"

"I know that it is not."

"Well, whatever it is, it is certainly headed directly for us."

"Then why in the world don't you forge ahead a little and get out of her track?"

"For the reason that I don't know yet what her track will be. I might run into her way instead of getting out of it."

"But oughtn't you to reply to her signals?"

"Yes, sir, I ought—if I obeyed the rules of navigation; but I am not doing that just now. I am trying to do what I promised you I would do—that is, find the *Pegasus* again."

"Hark!" said the detective suddenly.

"Yes, sir. I have heard it several times already."

"It is the whistle of another vessel, and it is exactly in the opposite direction."

"You are right, sir."

"They are approaching each other through the fog."

"They are, sir."

"We are directly between them."

"I have figured that we are exactly between them. And now, sir, I ask you to listen carefully and see if you notice anything peculiar about their signals."

The detective did as requested, and presently replied:

"No, Parker; I can't say that I do."

"Can you read the Morse telegraphic alphabet, sir?"

"Yes."

"Then listen again and see if these signals mean anything to you."

There was silence between them for a long time after that during which Nick listened attentively, first to the fog-whistle of one of the steamers that were hidden by the mists, and then to the other; and this is the manner in which they came to him:

Two long blasts from the vessel that was to the eastward of their position; two short blasts and one long one in reply, from the vessel to the westward; one short blast, then a pause followed by two short blasts from the vessel to the eastward; the same signal precisely from the vessel to the westward; one short blast followed by a long one from the vessel to the eastward, and then two short blasts, a pause and two more short blasts from the vessel to the westward.

Then silence for a considerable time.

"By Jove!" exclaimed the detective. "I don't think I ever would have thought of that!"

"Do you know what it spells, sir?" asked the captain.

"Certainly. It spells *M-u-r-r-a-y*. It's as plain as the nose on your face."

"That is what I thought, Mr. Carter. If you will wait a moment, you will hear the signal repeated."

"I understand it perfectly now. It simply means that one of those vessels is the *Pegasus*, and that the other one is the craft she is to meet out here."

"There can't be any doubt of that, sir."

"I wonder which is which? I wonder which of them is the *Pegasus*?"

"I think that she is to the westward."

"There they go again, and they are both much nearer."

"That they are, sir."

"Are you going to lie here motionless and permit them to run us down?"

"Hardly that, Mr. Carter; but I did think that I would permit them to draw up just as closely as will be safe. We can't *see* much, but we might *hear* something."

"Isn't it a big risk to run?"

"I don't think so. They will be moving very slowly. I figure from the sounds of their signals that they are running under considerably less than half speed. They have each got just enough headway to keep steerage way."

"And if they get too close, you figure that you can easily get out of the way; eh?"

"Exactly that. And without being seen or heard, either. I have passed the word forward already that there is to be no noise of any kind aboard the *Nadja*."

"You are a jewel, Parker."

"Thank you, sir. I try to do my duty in the best way I can."

At that moment the forms of Conners and Sturtevant loomed through the fog from the direction of the cabin, and Sturtevant asked:

"What is going on? Is this a sort of free concert we are having?"

"Something very much like one," replied the detective. "The *Pegasus* is approaching us from the westward, and another vessel, known to Murray and his friends, is drawing near from the opposite direction."

"How do you know that?" was the next question, and Nick explained.

"By gracious!" exclaimed Sturtevant. "It is a rendezvous; eh?"

"It has that appearance," replied the detective.

"But what in blazes do you suppose they are up to, anyhow?"

"Conners," said the detective, by way of reply, "I wish you would take Sturtevant to the cabin and explain the whole thing to him, won't you? Things are getting to a pass now, where we may have to do something before long. We may require Sturtevant's active assistance, and he doesn't want to go into the thing blindfolded."

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Sturtevant. "Murray and the others aren't pirates, are they?"

"Hardly that; but something approaching it," was the reply.

"Something approaching it? What in the world do you mean?"

"Smugglers."

"Smugglers? Well, I'll be—blowed! Say, Nick, that explains the whole thing, doesn't it?"

"I don't know; does it?"

"Sure thing. I can tell you the name of that other craft, off to the eastward."

"You can?" said the captain. "What is it?"

"The *Monarch*. Hadley bought her in Liverpool, two years ago almost. I happened to be there at the time, and I came home on the same steamer with him. I asked him then what he wanted of a vessel of her class, for she is hardly a yacht, you know, and he said that he was buying her for a friend. Sure! That word, 'smugglers,' put me wise in a minute."

"We are likely to find ourselves rather close to each of them very soon now," said the captain. "If you will excuse me, I will go to the wheel myself now."

He spoke truly, for now, when the signals sounded again, the whistles from both vessels seemed to be quite near; and it also appeared as if they were each bearing directly down upon the *Nadja*, and that she must inevitably be caught between them.

Then they felt their own vessel quiver, and the engines began very slowly to revolve; and next they heard a hoarse shout from starboard, through the mist; then came one from the other vessel on the port side, and for a moment it seemed inevitable that all three vessels must crash together.

CHAPTER VIII.

NICK CARTER'S DARING VENTURE.

Remember, it was now about eight o'clock in the morning, but bear in mind also that the fog was so dense that any attempt to see through it was like an effort to peer through a pane of frosted glass.

There was almost no wind at all, but a heavy dead swell was running which kept the *Nadja* rolling and pitching, so long as her engines were motionless, as if she were in the center of a heavy storm.

"There is one thing certain," remarked the captain, when they joined him in the wheel-house, "those two vessels can never get together to do any exchanging of cargoes, or of cargo, while this swell is running."

"You think not?" asked the detective.

"I know they can't. Do you notice how we are rolling and pitching? Well, you can take my word for it that the *Pegasus* is doing it a whole lot worse than we are. She isn't half as steady as the *Nadja*."

"What will they do, then?"

"I don't know. Listen."

"Ahoy, there!" came a hail through the fog from the direction of the *Pegasus*. "Are you the *Monarch*?"

"Aye, aye! Ahoy, the *Pegasus*. What's the word?"

"Murray."

"Good! And Hadley!"

"Aye, aye! And Russel!"

"Good again! And Cadillac."

"You had better sheer off a trifle, *Monarch*," came the next call from the *Pegasus*. "We are rolling and pitching to beat the band, and it wouldn't be well for us to drift together."

"No fear of that, I think. I'll look out for it. Will you send somebody aboard?" came the response.

"Yes; at once. We are lowering away a boat now. I hope we won't miss you in the fog."

"You can't miss me. I'm lying head on to the wind—that is what there is of it. Come up on the port side. We'll heave you aboard all right."

"Aye, aye," came the response, and then there was silence, broken only by the noise of the lines passing through the blocks as a boat was lowered into the water.

"Parker!" exclaimed Nick suddenly.

"Aye, aye, sir," replied the captain.

"I wonder if you could get a boat into the water so quietly that they could not hear you aboard either of those vessels?"

"I think it could be done; yes, sir."

"Then do it at once, Parker."

"May I ask what you are going to do, sir?"

"I am going to be present at that interview which is about to take place—if it is a possible thing to do so."

"It is a risky thing to do, sir."

"I know it; but I am going to do it, all the same."

"It would be different if there was somebody there to heave a line to you."

"I know that, too. But there isn't. You can give me that smallest boat, with two of your best oarsmen."

"Hadn't I better go along with you myself, sir?"

"No; your duty is here."

"But I will go with you," said Conners.

"No; I shall go alone. Pick out your best oarsmen, Parker. Tell them they are to put me directly under the forefoot of the *Monarch*, and that then they are to hang there, if possible, until I return. If they cannot do that, they are to keep as close to that spot as they can, so that if I have to jump into the sea in order to get away, I will have no difficulty in finding them. Quick, now! There is no time to lose."

The captain hurried away to fulfil his orders, and Conners said to Nick:

"It's too bad, old man. I think you might let me go with you."

"Such a course would only double the risk," was the detective's reply. "I will tell you what you can do, though."

"Well?"

"You can go in the boat with me, if you will promise to remain in the boat and not attempt to leave it."

"I will do that, of course."

"Then you will be there to make those sailors obey orders."

"Sure."

"I think we can get up under the forefoot. I ought to be able to seize the bowsprit stays and so heave myself aboard."

"You are not going in that rig you have on, are you, Nick?"

"No. Go to where they are making the boat ready and wait there for me. I'll be back in a moment."

He ran to the cabin and stripped himself of his clothing in a moment. Then he dragged from a locker a woolen shirt and a pair of sailors' trousers. These he donned, with a pair of felt slippers which he could easily kick off his feet if the necessity should arise; and then he hurried to the deck again.

The boat was already in the water, and the men were in readiness to proceed with the hazardous undertaking.

Sturtevant was there, chewing the end of an unlighted cigar; but the only comment he made was:

"I never thought before, Carter, that you were an ass, but, upon my life! if this isn't about the most assinine undertaking I ever heard of!"

The detective made no reply.

He seized the rope that dangled over the side from one of the davits and slid down it into the boat, and in another moment they had left the side of the yacht and were lost to sight of those on board in the thickness of the fog.

Naturally, those who were aboard of the *Pegasus* and the *Monarch* had no suspicion that another vessel was in such proximity to them; they had no idea of such a thing, and therefore it had not occurred to the captain of either craft to enjoin silence upon his crew.

Voices could plainly be heard proceeding from the decks of each of the vessels, and it was therefore not at all a difficult task to steer the small boat directly for the *Monarch*.

The only real danger at that present moment was that in the density of the fog they might encounter the small boat from the *Pegasus*.

But they did not.

The oarsmen whom Parker had selected were masters at the craft, and the cockleshell, like a feather upon the huge billows of the ocean, was sent ahead as true as a bullet from a rifle.

Guided by the noises aboard the *Monarch*, which became momentarily more distinct as they drew nearer, they passed her in the fog, then spun their boat around and permitted the huge swells and the gentle breeze to drift them down upon her toward the point they desired to reach.

And they reckoned their distance and their position perfectly.

Nick and Conners, who were watching, and were ready to act, saw suddenly the darker outlines of the bowsprit where it projected over their heads, and with a spring into the air from the thwart of the boat, the detective seized the stays and swung himself upon them.

Instantly the oars were dipped again and the boat shot away from the hull of the vessel, out of danger, leaving Nick Carter clinging like a monkey underneath the figurehead of the *Monarch*.

For a moment he hung there, determining just what he would do.

He had already given full instructions to the men in the boat who had brought him there.

They were to lay by, and to keep as nearly underneath the end of the bowsprit as was possible, with the understanding that when the detective was through with his errand aboard the *Monarch* he would make his way to the end of the bowsprit and drop from there into the sea.

He would have to trust to luck that the boat would be near at hand to pick him up—that was all.

It was a heavy risk to run; a grave danger to incur, but Nick Carter never once calculated upon that; his only idea was to accomplish what he had started out to do.

And now he swung himself upward, bit by bit, until he could grasp the edge of the bulwark or rail. After that it was an easy matter to swing himself over it upon the deck.

He had not expected that there would be a watch there now, and he was not disappointed.

The bow was vacant.

Farther aft he could hear the sounds of voices, and dimly through the fog he could discern the outlines of the forms of men.

The important thing was, could he pass them safely without it being discovered that he did not belong there.

He believed he could, simply because of the very audacity of the act.

Even if his figure should be seen—even if it should occur to whoever saw him that his figure was not exactly familiar, it would never be dreamed that a stranger could come aboard of the vessel out of the ocean.

The detective banked upon this idea, and upon the very daring of his act; and since the boldest way was evidently the best way, he walked deliberately along the deck toward the after part of the vessel.

He took good care, however, to keep as far away from anybody as he could; and in this way he had reached the waist of the *Monarch*, and was passing along on his way aft, when a voice—the voice of a sailor, evidently—called out to him:

"Hello, Pete. Up, are you? Feeling better, eh?"

By which he concluded that one of the sailors of the vessel was ill and had been confined to his bunk.

He deigned no reply, however, and as he passed on he heard the man who had hailed him mutter to himself:

"He needn't be so cussed silent about it, if it was my fault he got hurt."

But the detective did not linger.

He passed swiftly along toward the entrance to the cabin, for he knew that it would be there where he would obtain any information that was to be gleaned.

Then he came to a halt.

He had been moving along the starboard side of the yacht, and now he heard voices and the accompanying sounds which told him that the boat from the *Pegasus* had just arrived, and that the men who were in her were being helped aboard.

"This is my great chance," he decided on the spot. "The captain's cabin should be empty just now. The whole attention of the ship will be centered on the arrival of that boat from the *Pegasus*. Anyhow, here goes!"

He hurried aft then, to the door of the captain's cabin.

One hasty glance inside told him that he had figured correctly.

The cabin was empty.

Quickly, silently, like a shadow through the fog, he passed inside and looked around him for a place in which he could conceal himself.

He knew that he had not a moment to lose. He knew that the captain of the *Monarch*, accompanied probably by Murray or one of his associates, would soon enter the cabin for their talk.

In the very center of the cabin was a square table covered by a velvet plush cloth that was much too large for it; so large, in fact, that it fell almost to the deck on each of the four sides.

It offered the very place he wanted, and in another instant he was concealed beneath it—just as the expected visitors entered the cabin door.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SMUGGLERS' CONFERENCE.

It was the voice of Stanhope Murray which first came to the ears of the detective, where he was huddled upon the deck beneath the table.

"Tell you what, Marston," he was saying, "I have seen fogs before, but I never yet encountered one like this. Did you?"

"Not often, Murray," was the reply. "It is fortunate that we were able to locate each other; don't you think so?"

"Yes. We never could have accomplished it in the world if it had not been for those signals of ours. That was a fortunate thought of mine, eh? This is the first

time we have had to use my new system of wireless telegraphy, eh?"

He laughed heartily at the joke. He evidently regarded it as a good one.

Then he added:

"I suppose the swell is running altogether too high for us to try to take over your stuff while we lie here, isn't it?"

"Decidedly so," was the reply.

And then the soft voice of Cadillac intervened.

"Don't you think the swell will die after awhile, if we wait?" he asked.

"No," replied the captain. "The sea will be rougher before it is smoother. We will get a blow out of the west before night, and I shouldn't wonder if we had about half a gale out of it, too."

"And you think it would be impossible to make the transfer before that time?"

"Quite."

"Then what are we to do?" asked Murray impatiently.

"I will tell you what I think about it, gentlemen," replied Captain Marston.

"Well?" they both inquired at once, and with one voice.

"I think we will get a three days' blow after this weather of to-day. I think it will be a hard blow, too."

"You said that before, Marston."

"Wait till you hear me out."

"Fire away."

"After that blow there will be a swell running that will last two or three days more, even if we don't get another blow in the meantime. Now, that would mean that we would have to convoy each other, so to speak, for the next week—you remember that we had to do that once before, don't you?"

"Yes," they agreed.

"Therefore, I think we would save time if we make at once for a safe place in which to make the transfer; a safe and sure place."

"Do you know of such a place, in spite of the storm that you say is approaching?" asked Cadillac.

"Yes, I do. And hereafter I think it would be well, and would save time, if we made our rendezvous there. I have thought of suggesting it before."

"Where is it?"

"At the northern limit of the Saragossa Sea."

"The Saragossa Sea! That is a myth, isn't it?"

"Not by any means. It is a fact; and it is the very place for us."

"Why?"

"For one thing, there is never any wind to speak of there. For another, there is rarely any swell, either, save a long, lazy, dead swell that wouldn't bother us. For still another reason, there isn't a sail of any description in sight from there not once in a year, or two years."

"You mean that you think we had better head for there at once?" asked Murray.

"I do."

"How long will it take us to get there from where we are now?"

"Forty-eight to fifty hours, with good luck."

"How shall we find it?"

"Your navigator, Bronson, will know. He will also know the exact spot I mean."

"You used to sail together, didn't you?"

"Yes. We have had occasion to go there before now. He will know where to meet me if you tell him what I have told you."

"And you think that is the best course to pursue?"

"By all means. There will be no danger there. And I think that hereafter we should meet there always. It will take a little longer, but it will be enough safer to make up for the delay."

"That reminds me," said Murray, "that the treasury department is getting after us, and something or other has put the secret service rather hot on the trail, too."

"Tell me what you mean," said the captain anxiously.

"I mean that the secret service has written to all the yacht-clubs in the country for a list of yachts and owners' names—and that the lists have been forwarded."

"That looks as if they suspected——"

"It is proof positive that they have found out at least that smuggling is going on by the wholesale. They have probably been working quietly on it for a long time, and have at last thought it possible that one of the private yachts might be in the business."

"You have no reason to suppose that you are suspected, have you, Murray?" asked the captain.

"Not the least in the world. On the contrary. There was an odd thing happened night before last, though."

"What was that?"

"We were all at the club together—playing a game of poker, just to have the name of doing it, you know."

"Yes."

"About midnight in walked Nick Carter. He is a member of the club. You know who he is, of course, Marston?"

"No; can't say that I do, Murray."

"Thank the Lord I have found one man who never heard of Nick Carter. He is a detective."

"Well, what about him?"

"He came into the room where we were playing poker, and with him was a man named Roger Conners—and Roger Conners is a detective officer connected with the Secret Service at Washington, and, I am told, one of the best men that Wilkie has under him."

"Do you think it was an accident that they happened to show up there at the club together? Or do you have an idea that they were—well, that they had any suspicions about you, and our friends, and the *Pegasus*?"

"Marston, that is just what has been puzzling me, and the others as well, ever since."

"I think it was just a happen-so," said Cadillac. "Neither of them attempted to follow us when we came away from the club."

"Yes," said Murray, "and I invited Carter to come with us on this trip."

"I could have broken your head when you did that," said Cadillac. "Suppose he had accepted?"

"Well, he didn't, did he?"

"But suppose he had done so?"

"What is the use of supposing such a thing when it did not occur?"

"All the same, he hesitated when you asked him, and I thought at the time that he had it on the point of his tongue to say yes."

"I'll confess that he gave me that impression also," admitted Murray.

"Suppose he had decided to come along—what would you have done about it, Murray?"

"I would have lost him overboard at sea, that's what would have happened," replied Murray savagely.

"Do you mean that?"

"Of course I mean it."

"I don't think it will help our business along any to add murder to the list of ventures we make," said Cadillac coldly.

"Nor I; but I wouldn't hesitate long between that and being caught. You can bet your life on that! And if Carter had decided to come with us, he'd have been food for fishes before this time. You hear me!"

"Then it is decidedly fortunate for all of us that he answered in the negative," said Captain Marston.

"Yes; and for him particularly."

"Don't you think it would be a good idea if we get down to business?" asked the captain, yawning over this unnecessary argument.

"Quite so," replied Cadillac. "What is your cargo this time, Marston?"

"Do you wish to see the manifest?"

"No; that isn't necessary. Just give me an idea."

"Well, there are a hundred and fifty bales of silks; about two hundred thousand dollars in paintings; a half a million, I think, or about that, in made-up costumes and gowns. I've a lot of Russian sables, and furs of all descriptions. There are some diamonds and other jewels in the safe, and—well, I have the most valuable cargo this time that I have ever brought over. It will run up to almost two millions, I think."

"Good! I suppose that is one reason why you think it worth while to run to a safer spot than this one, in order to make the transfer, eh?"

"Yes, it is. We ought to take no chances this time. We have incurred altogether too many risks in the past."

"I guess you are right about that."

"Now, what have you brought for me? More tobacco and cigars?"

"Thousands of them! Thousands of them! I wouldn't dare to tell you how many. Hadley attends to all that, you know."

"Yes."

"How are our friends on the other side? Are they 'all to the good' yet? You said the last time we met that they were getting squeamish over there."

"No; nowhere but in England. Thompson hasn't much sand. He has the idea that the English authorities suspect him. You know he hasn't a very clean record."

"I know."

"I think, after I have delivered his portion of the cigars and tobacco, that we had better cut him out for a few trips, at least, and devote our whole attention to the French and German end of it."

"Our people at Havre are all right, aren't they?"

"Sure. They've got sand. They never turn a hair."

"I suppose you have brought the cash with you, for the last cargo of tobacco and the last quarterly settlement, haven't you?"

"Yes. Your share. I will pay it over to you, Cadillac, after we have made the transfer and are ready to part company. And, by the way, it will be about three months this time before we will get together again."

"So long as that?"

"That was what I was told to tell you. But I will give you all the particulars when we get together down at the Saragossa Sea. Just now I think you fellows had better be getting back to the *Pegasus*. There will be a blow before long, and you don't want to get caught in it here on this ship, do you?"

"Not much. We sail direct for the Saragossa, do we?"

"Yes."

"And you are sure that Bronson will know——"

"Absolutely. You only have to tell him what I have said about it."

"Then we will be going, Murray. Come on."

"Have a drink first?" asked the captain.

"No, thank you. We've enough on the *Pegasus*."

Then, together, the three left the cabin.

And a moment later Nick Carter crawled from beneath the table, hastened to the door, and peered out anxiously after them.

Now was the time, and the only time, he would have to make his escape.

CHAPTER X.

ADRIFT ON A FOG-BOUND SEA.

The three men halted for a moment just outside the cabin door; but it was only for a moment. Then they continued on again toward the place on the port side of the vessel where they had come aboard.

Instantly the detective took advantage of the opportunity thus offered.

He passed out boldly from the cabin to the deck, and glided along close to the bulkhead toward the forward part of the vessel.

He found an open place where he could cross to the starboard side, and there he made his way rapidly forward.

He had reached the waist of the ship—in fact, he had already begun to feel secure in his escape—when, in passing the galley, he came face to face with the chief officer of the vessel.

"Here, Pete! What have you been doing aft? Hey?" he exclaimed gruffly; and then, with a sudden start, he exclaimed:

"By the Lord Harry, it isn't Pete! Who——"

He got no farther than that, for Nick already had him by the throat and was rapidly choking him into insensibility.

But the process of choking proved too slow to satisfy the detective, and, after a second or two, he raised his hand and struck the mate a violent blow above his temple.

That blow proved to be all that was required in addition to the choking, for the mate at once became limp and inanimate in the hands of the detective.

And now Nick Carter felt that he was face to face with a quandary.

He could not kill the man in cold blood; that was impossible.

But it might be fatal to the detective's plans to leave him there to recover consciousness slowly, and then to relate that he had encountered a total stranger aboard the vessel, who attacked him savagely.

It is true that his story might not be fully acceptable at first; but if later the fog should happen to lift before the *Nadja* was far enough away to seem to have just appeared in sight, a sharp man like Captain Marston might easily put two and two together and figure that the stranger described by his first officer had come from her during the fog.

It was too great a risk to run.

The detective saw that plainly.

It would be better by far that the mate should disappear utterly, and leave a mystery behind him.

"And besides," the detective argued with himself, during those few seconds when he was turning the matter over in his mind, "this fellow might prove to be a valuable source of information, if once I could get him aboard the *Nadja*."

But how to get him aboard?

There was the difficulty.

It was about as much as Nick Carter cared to undertake to get himself aboard without attempting to take a prisoner with him.

He realized, also, that there was no time to lose.

Already Murray and Cadillac were over the side, and the detective knew that as soon as they were well away on their return the *Monarch* would start ahead again.

All these thoughts and conjectures passed through his mind while one might have counted half a dozen; and at the end of them he decided.

He picked the mate up bodily in his arms and started rapidly forward with him toward the bow of the vessel.

There was still the danger of being seen, but Nick felt that that was reduced to a minimum by the interest that was evidently being taken by all hands in the departure of the two men who had come from the *Pegasus*.

Anyhow, the risk had to be taken, and he took it.

Moreover, he reached the bow in safety, and without encountering another human being.

There, his first act was to kick the felt slippers from his feet into the sea; his next was to deposit his burden for a moment and to seize upon a heaving line that was coiled upon the deck.

With dextrous speed, he wound the rope several times around the body of the mate under his armpits, and, having made it fast in such a way that it would not deprive the man of his breath when that should return, the detective ran swiftly out upon the bowsprit with the mate in his arms, and he did not stop until he had reached the foretopmast stay, which is fastened to the very tip of a bowsprit.

Fortune—and the skill of his boatmen, as well as the insistence of Conners—favored him.

He discovered at once that his boat was almost directly under him, and, having called softly to Conners, he at once lowered his prisoner through the fog.

Conners, of course, could have no idea whatever what was coming when he saw the man being lowered upon them, but he managed to seize the unconscious figure as it swung within his reach.

As soon as that was done, Nick let fall the other half of the heaving line over the other side of the bowsprit, and then, grasping the two lengths in his hands, he went rapidly down it; and then, by swinging a moment, he managed to alight, dry, inside the boat.

But he also retained his hold upon the line, and as soon as he felt the boat under him he released one strand of it and, retaining the other, pulled it free from the rigging of the ship so that there would be no dangling rope left to tell its discoverers what had happened.

"Give way, boys," he ordered, in a low tone. "Do you think you can find the *Nadja?*"

"We have tried to keep our bearing, sir," replied the oarsman who was nearest to him; and he spoke almost in a whisper. "I think we will have no trouble in finding her."

Even as Nick gave the order, they all heard the chug, chug of the *Monarch's* engines.

She was starting ahead again, and they barely had time to get out of her way when she glided past them and disappeared in the fog.

"Gee!" said Conners, when she was gone, "if anybody had happened to be looking over the side in our direction just then we would have been discovered."

"Hush!" replied Nick sternly. "We will do our talking when we are safely back again aboard the *Nadja.*"

After that not a word was said among them.

Off in the distance to the westward they could hear the preparations for the departure of the *Pegasus.*

They heard Murray hail her from the boat, and heard the reply; and after that there was a continuous shouting from boat to yacht until the tackle could be heard creaking in the blocks, and they knew that the boat was being hoisted to the davits.

Otherwise all was silence.

There could be no shouting of directions to them from the decks of the *Nadja.* They must trust to their own sagacity to find their way back again to their vessel.

The *Monarch* had long since disappeared.

True, they could still hear the noise of her engines and the chugging of her propeller against the water, but that was rapidly becoming fainter, and soon it would be altogether out of hearing.

And then it was drowned by another sound.

The bell rang in the engine-room of the *Pegasus.* Her engines started ahead, and she, too, was under way.

Suddenly, while they were all listening intently, Nick called out to his men in a low tone, which, however, reached them all:

"Pull, men! Pull for your lives!"

They responded gallantly, and only just in time, for as they shot ahead, the hull of the *Pegasus* glided past them so close that Nick, in the stern of the boat, could almost touch her.

"That was a narrow shave," he remarked quietly, after it was over. "If she had been under full headway, we must have been swamped as it was."

"Do you think we were seen from the decks?" asked Conners breathlessly.

"No; we were too close in for that."

"Well, if she doesn't smash into the *Nadja,* it will be all right."

But she did not.

She glided away through the fog and was gone, almost like a spirit, and the small boat containing the five men, one of them unconscious, was alone upon the water, save for the fact that somewhere near them they knew the *Nadja* was waiting to pick them up.

"The very best thing that we can do," said Nick, at last, "is to remain here quietly where we are until it is safe to hail. I think you have lost your bearings, haven't you, boys?"

"Aye, aye, sir," was the reply.

"Well, rest on your oars and wait. After about ten minutes more, I will hail."

He permitted fifteen minutes to pass, however, before he raised his voice and called out:

"Ahoy, the *Nadja!*"

They all listened intently, but there was no reply; and after a few minutes he called again:

"Ahoy, the *Nadja! Ahoy!*" he shouted this time.

Silence was the only response he received.

"That's odd," muttered Conners. "Where the devil do you suppose she is?"

"She cannot be very far away," replied Nick; and he shouted again, this time even louder than either time before.

But silence was again their answer; and Nick remarked:

"The explanation of it is that we have somehow drifted away from her. We have gotten into some cross-current which has taken us away from her and is probably still doing so."

"Well," said Conners, "don't you think it would be a good idea to row around and try to find her?"

"Not at all, Conners. We might, and probably would, row directly away from her. The only thing that we can do is to sit where we are and wait. Parker won't go away and leave us as long as this fog holds. You can rest assured of that."

"The feeling of the air is changing, Nick. It is going to blow presently. Don't you think so?"

"Yes."

"For one, I heartily wish I was aboard the yacht."

"We all wish that, and we will all be there before long."

"I wish that this infernal fog would lift."

"I don't; at least, not just yet."

"Why not?"

"I don't care to have the people on the *Monarch* and the *Pegasus* discover the *Nadja*. It would make no difference an hour hence; but now—well, it might arouse suspicion, particularly when this chap is missed. Hello! You are coming around, are you?"

He had glanced down at the supposed unconscious man at his feet, only to discover that his eyes were wide open and that they were fixed upon him with an expression partly of fear and wholly of rage.

His reply to Nick's question was characteristic of his calling.

"You are the blankety-blank blankety-blank that I took for Pete, aren't you?" he demanded.

"I suppose I am," replied Nick.

"Well, what I want to know is what in —— you have brought me here for, and what you think you are going to do with me!"

"I'll tell you what I'll do with you, if you want to know," replied the detective coldly. "I will chuck you overboard and leave you to swim ashore, if you don't keep a civil tongue in your head."

"How'd you get me here, hey?"

"I brought you here, and that is enough for the present. Now shut up and speak when you are spoken to. Conners, hail again, will you?"

And Conners lifted his voice and sent out a hail across the waters which might have been heard a mile away.

Then they all remained quiet, listening.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BLACK FLAG OF PIRACY.

It was three hours later before they were finally taken aboard the *Nadja*, and the wind by that time was blowing pretty fresh.

It was not, in fact, until the fog had lifted somewhat that they discovered the *Nadja* at all; and they were seen from the deck of the yacht at the same moment.

"Parker," said the detective to his captain, as soon as they were all in the cabin together, the prisoner having been cared for forward, "what do you know about the Saragossa Sea?"

"I know where it is. That's about all that anybody knows about it. You know what it is, don't you?"

"I have heard."

"Well, it is a place in line with the change of the trade-winds, and it is located in a sort of triangle between three of the greatest of our ocean currents. The action of the currents creates a slow eddy—so slow that you do not realize that it is moving; but the consequence is that all the weeds and refuse of the ocean, and what comes out of the gulf and from the mouths of the big rivers, are gradually forced into that triangle.

"When they get inside of it once, they can't get out; and they go traveling around and around forever after that. I have been told that the weeds are so thick and so matted together that the most powerful steamer that floats could not make headway through them, but would be brought to a stop, unable to go forward or to back up.

"It's a God-forsaken spot, I understand, the port of no clearance; the last home of the derelict. May I ask why you asked that question?"

"Because the *Monarch* and the *Pegasus* are headed for the northern edge of the Saragossa Sea, where they propose to make the exchange of plunder. We have got to follow them there. Do you think you can find the place?"

"Certainly. Without any trouble at all."

"Do you think you could manage to keep out of sight of those fellows and still get there first?"

"Yes; I think that can be done, too."

"Do it if you can."

"The only trouble is I don't know anything about the speed of the *Monarch*."

"Well, I don't think you need let that worry you. It is possible that she may be a little faster than the *Pegasus*, but I think they will convoy each other all the way down."

"May I ask another question, Mr. Carter?"

"Certainly."

"If you don't mind telling me, I would like to know what you expect to do when we come upon those two craft."

"I have been thinking about that, Parker."

"You see, sir, there are two vessels in that outfit. You know now that they are smugglers, and you also know that they couldn't be smugglers such as they are and carry crews of men unless the men were taken into their confidence, and had some sort of share in the profits of the enterprise. You realize that, don't you, sir?"

"Yes."

"Well, sir, if that is the case, they are probably well manned. More than that, they will have a set of men aboard who won't want to get caught."

"I understand that also."

"And the probability is that they will put up a desperate fight if they are called upon to do it. How big is the *Monarch?*"

"She is a trifle larger than the *Nadja*, I should say."

"Then it is safe to suppose that she carries about twenty men."

"Yes; call it that."

"The *Pegasus* carried twelve in her crew, and there are four more aboard of her now."

"What are you driving at, Parker?"

"I was wondering how we could work it to capture both of those vessels, with their crews, with our men. We are twenty, all told, sir. That is counting you and your friends, and me also."

"Yes."

"The odds would be about two to one against us, take it all together, sir."

"Well? I see that you have something to suggest. What is it? I know you too well to suppose that you are hesitating about attacking them."

"Yes, sir. I have got an idea, and I think it is a good one."

"What is it?"

"We have changed our color and altered our rig so that it is a pretty safe proposition that neither Murray nor any of his friends will recognize the *Nadja*, isn't it?"

"I feel very certain about that."

"Well, Mr. Carter, down below, in one of my lockers, I have a beautiful pirate flag. It is as black as a coal, and it has a beautiful skull and cross-bones woven into it in white. It was presented to me at a banquet once, as a joke, and I have always kept it."

"Go on, Parker. You interest me. I see that you have a good idea somewhere in your wise old head."

"I can set our carpenter to work with a couple of helpers, and between now and the time we arrive at the Saragossa Sea we can have a pair of very good imitation swivel-guns mounted, one at the fore and one aft; and if there is time we could add to our stock by having one more amidships. They would look real nice, and mighty solemn, if you happened to be at the wrong end of 'em."

"Your scheme is to play pirate, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir; but you haven't heard me out."

"Go on."

"I know that you have a whole lot of togs aboard here, and I think that each one of our men has an extra suit or two in his hamper."

"Well?"

"I was thinking that it wouldn't be much of a job to rig up all those extras so they would look like men. Then we could distribute them along the yacht where they would do the most good and be the most conspicuous."

"Go on, Parker. You're a dandy!"

"After that it would be up to you and Mr. Conners to rig yourselves out in disguises that would make you look like pirate chieftains; and you would have to fix me up a bit, too, for Murray would know me if he happened to clap a glass onto me when we hove 'em to."

"Yes."

"Well, sir, ever since I have sailed the seas there have been stories about a pirate that hangs around the edges of the Saragossa. Sailors are a lot more afraid of that supposed pirate than they are of the weeds. You can take my word for it."

"And you mean by that—what?"

"I mean that we are to get there before they do, as you suggested. That we are to lie in wait for them along the northern edge of the weeds."

"Yes."

"And when they show up we will just hoist the black flag and run down upon them. That brass signal-gun will make a dandy noise if she's loaded properly, and we have got about a dozen solid shot that will fit into her. We can send a shot across their bows and order them to heave to in the good old-fashioned way; and you can take my word for it that they won't have a sailor man aboard of 'em who won't throw up his hands and squeal the minute the skull and cross-bones is seen."

"Wait a minute," said the detective; and he went to the companionway and called to Conners and Sturtevant.

As soon as they were present, he recounted over again the plan outlined by Captain Parker, and there was much laughing while they enlarged upon it.

"There is only one thing that bothers me," said Nick, in conclusion, "and that is, what right have we got to make any arrests out here in the open sea?"

"We haven't any," replied Conners. "All the same, if we could capture the pair of them, red-handed as we know them to be, and could then run them both into the Chesapeake, and so on up the Potomac, straight to Washington—well, I think I'd be willing to take chances on our rights in the matter."

"We could drop you off at Old Point, or at Norfolk, and you could go on to Washington by train, and so be ready to meet us when we arrived there," said the detective.

"Sure. We could do that."

"I suppose the *Monarch* has an English register, and flies the English flag," said Nick dubiously.

"What of that?" returned Conners. "She is breaking the laws of the United States. We will simply arrest the two outfits first, and secure our warrants afterward."

"Don't you think it can be done, Mr. Conners?" asked the captain.

"Done? Of course it can be done. There is only one suggestion that I think of in the way of a change in your plans."

"What might that be, sir?"

"I think it would be a good plan to keep out of sight until they are about in the midst of the transfer of their properties, or cargoes; or until they have nearly completed the transfer. If you could regulate your time so that you could do that——"

"We would have to guess at it; but I think I could make a fairly good guess. I know the *Pegasus* from stem to stern, and I know to an inch what speed she can make."

"Well?" said Nick. "What of that?"

"Nothing, only I can figure almost to half an hour just when she will arrive there. Then if we take into consideration their preparations for making the exchange, we ought to be able to bear down upon them at about the right time."

"The only thing that troubles me," said Conners, "is how we are to make the actual capture with the few men we've got."

"I can answer that question," replied Nick Carter.

"Well?"

"In the first place, we surprise them at their work of transferring the goods from one vessel to another. We will bear down on them so swiftly that they will be rattled. We will send a shot across their bows as they lie side by side, just to wake them up and let them know that we are there, and are in earnest. Then we will heave to in a position where, if our guns were real guns, we could rake them fore and aft. The black flag will frighten them; the guns will awe them—and then we will order their officers to come aboard of us."

"Do you think they will come?"

"We will tell them that we will sink them if they refuse—and I think they will come readily enough, in the hope of making terms with the pirate."

"Do you think, Nick, that they will really believe that we are pirates?"

"I don't know why they shouldn't believe it. They are smugglers themselves. Both professions are rather out of date, and I don't know why one shouldn't be taken up again as well as another. They will believe it all right."

"But after we have captured them, if we do, how are we going to man those two vessels and take them into port?"

"Why, that's easy. I will take five of my men from the *Nadja* and go aboard of the *Monarch*, where with five of her own men we can handle her. You will do the same in the case of the *Pegasus*. Parker will remain

here on the *Nadja* with a few of the men drafted from the *Pegasus* to assist those we do not take from him here. All the rest we will put in irons, and keep them so until we turn them over to Wilkie."

"I think it can be done, Nick."

"I am sure of it now. It is rather a high-handed proceeding, and we might be held for piracy on the high seas for it—if it weren't for the fact that we could go straight to Washington with the fruits of our victory. And once we get our prisoners there, the whole thing will be regarded as a huge and monstrous joke."

"That's as true as you live," said Conners.

"Then it's settled, Parker," added Nick. "We'll do it."

CHAPTER XII.

THE CAPTURE.

Two vessels were lying side by side, almost motionless on the smooth waters which surround that mysterious locality known as the Saragossa Sea.

One of them was somewhat larger than the other, but they were nevertheless lashed together so securely that they rose and fell on the breast of the swells, as if they were formed of one hull.

One of them was black—the larger one. The other appeared at first to be white. But if an observer could have approached her closely, he would have discovered that her sides were covered by strips of canvas painted gray, put there to conceal her real color.

Men were hastening to and from each of the vessels. They were carrying all sorts of boxes and bales, while near them, directing their efforts, five men were grouped—and these five we already know.

The time was late in the afternoon. The sun was shining hotly upon the scene, but it had already dipped so low toward the horizon that it could not be long before evening would be at hand.

So busily were the men engaged, and so intently were their superiors watching them, that no attention whatever was paid to the sea around where they were lying, until suddenly one of the sailors who was carrying a large package from the *Monarch* to the *Pegasus*, dropped it midway in his journey, and stood with mouth agape and with staring eyes, peering northward.

Instantly every man who was above decks turned to look in the direction in which he was staring; and then, with one accord, they turned to look at one another.

A black yacht was bearing down upon them at a frightful rate of speed.

She seemed to approach them like an arrow out of a bow; but that was not the surprising element about her, although no vessel of any description would have been welcome there at just that moment.

The black flag of piracy, with its skull and cross-bones, was flying at the top of a temporary mast which the detective had had erected for the purpose.

Already, when she was discovered by the sailor, she was almost upon them. She had approached so quietly and so swiftly that she was within hailing distance almost before she was discovered.

And then, just as she was discovered, there was a puff of smoke from her starboard bow. It was followed by a loud report that went echoing over the waters, and a round shot could be seen skipping from wave to wave as it hurried past them.

Captain Marston leaped from the deck of the *Pegasus* to his own vessel, shouting vainly at his men to dive below and secure the small arms that were stored away there, ready for an emergency; but they seemed not to hear him at all; or, if they heard, they paid no heed whatever to his commands.

"Curse you!" he shouted again. "Get down there and arm yourselves. We will make a fight for it, anyhow!"

Not a man moved to obey him. They were all staring, wild-eyed and with gaping jaws, at the approaching pirate, now so near that a swarm of men could be seen along her decks where they seemed to be peering idly at their expected prey.

More than that, three big guns, which looked like six-inch rifles, were plainly observable on the pirate's deck, and each one of the guns was trained upon the two vessels that were lashed so tightly together, and which were therefore all the more helpless.

Then, one by one, that horde of men along the sides of the pirate disappeared. They had evidently been ordered back to their several duties, and to arm themselves for the fight—if fight there was to be.

And then the fierce-looking pirate slowed down, backed water, and finally came to a dead stop, quite within hailing distance, and in such a position that the poorest judgment aboard the two smugglers must have known that her guns would rake them fore and aft if they were discharged.

And then the figure of the pirate chieftain leaped upon the rail of his own vessel. He was red-haired, red-bearded, and he was dressed after the fashion of an approved Italian bandit, with gold braid over his green costume, and with a red sash strung around his body, into which he had thrust numerous weapons.

He was Nick Carter, of course.

"Ahoy, there!" he shouted, in surprisingly good English. "Lower away a boat and send your officers aboard of us, or I will sink you where you lie!"

Murray started forward to reply, but Captain Marston pulled him back, and himself stepped forward.

"Who are you? And what do you want?" he demanded.

Nick Carter disdained any reply. Instead, he turned and waved his hand toward the waist of his own vessel, and called out:

"Ready, there, in the waist! Rake 'em fore——"

"Wait! For God's sake wait!" yelled Marston.

"Then do as I told you. Lower away a boat and send your officers aboard. All of them!"

"It shall be done at once. Perhaps we can make terms with you," called Marston, now thoroughly cowed.

"Every one of 'em!" called Nick again sternly. And then, with a loud laugh, which would have done credit to a real pirate, he added:

"There are five of you there in sight. I see 'em. Send 'em all here; and your chief officers, too. Quick, now. We don't carry much patience aboard this craft, mister."

Within three minutes from that time the boat was in the water at the side of the *Monarch*, and one by one the men aboard the *Nadja* could see Murray, and Russel, and Hadley, and Cadillac lower themselves into it.

They were in the act of starting away when Nick called out again:

"Hold on, there, you! Where are your officers? I want your officers, too."

And so Captain Bronson, of the *Pegasus*, and Marston, with two other officers, were added to the number.

"Ready now," said Nick quietly to his own men. "I will have them come over the side one by one. Conners, you step into the waist to receive them. Bandage their eyes and clap irons upon their wrists the moment they appear. Then take them below. You can iron them by the ankles, too, the moment you get them down there. We won't let them know what has happened till we get them in Washington. Give you my solemn word, Roger, I never had so much fun in all my life as I am having at this minute!"

The small boat came to the side of the yacht, and then, in obedience to orders from the "pirate chief," they came up the side one by one, and were received as Nick had directed.

The moment one appeared he was seized and blindfolded; then irons were clapped upon his wrists, after which he was led below; and in this manner the nine were disposed of.

When that was all attended to, and Conners and the captain had reported back again, Nick once more hailed the smuggler craft.

"Ahoy, there!" he called.

"Aye, aye, sir," replied a sailor.

"I want every man jack of you to pass forward into the chains and stay there! Quick!"

The alacrity with which they obeyed was astonishing, and after two minutes there was not a man aboard of either vessel who was not huddled with the others at the bows.

"Now," called Nick, "if one of you makes a move until I give the order, I'll blow your bodies into a thousand pieces, and send them sky-high. See to it that you obey me."

He turned then to his own men, and in tones purposely rendered loud enough so that he could be heard aboard the other vessels, he called out:

"Lower away that cutter. You have had your orders already. See that they are carried out, because if they are not, there will be some vacancies in this crew."

Ten of Nick's sailors, under the command of Conners and Parker, and each and all rigged out like the veritable pirates we used to read about, descended to the cutter, and were rowed quickly toward the two captured vessels.

Nick Carter never left his post on the rail as he watched them board the *Pegasus* first, and he could scarcely refrain from bursting into laughter as he watched Conners call the sailors of the two captured yachts to them, one by one, and make prisoners of them.

And this process was continued until there was not a man who had been accredited to either of the crews who had not been placed in irons, or bound so that he could not escape.

The capture was complete.

Not a shot had been fired; not a sign of resistance had been shown.

The *Pegasus* and the *Monarch* would do no more smuggling for some time to come, at least.

It was now almost dark, but there was not a breath of air stirring and the sea was almost smooth.

And now came the task of selecting a sufficient number of the old crews to assist in manning the vessels on their way into port at Washington.

In this the detective carried out the plan he had outlined in his talk with Conners and Captain Parker.

He took charge himself of the *Monarch*, and with five of his own men from the *Nadja* and five selected with care from among the captured men, he knew he could navigate her into port.

Conners was assigned to the *Pegasus*, and there the same tactics were adopted; that is, five men from the *Nadja* were to work with five of the old crew.

And then five more of the captured men were selected to go aboard the *Nadja* with Parker.

It was almost midnight when the three engines were started again, and the three vessels, at safe distances apart, headed toward Washington—or, rather, for the Chesapeake; but it was a bright, beautiful, starlight night.

And here ends our story.

The only thing that remains to be told is that the three vessels arrived without accident at the Washington navy yard, where Conners—who had gone on ahead by rail from Norfolk—met them; and he had with him Chief Wilkie and sundry other officers to take charge of the captured men, property, and ships.

The rage of Murray and his associates, and particularly Marston, cannot be described, when they discovered how thoroughly they had been fooled. But the information came too late to be of benefit to them.

THE END.

The next issue, No. 498, will contain "Following An Ocean Trail; or, Nick Carter's Chase After Pirates."

ABOUT THE EARLY NUMBERS OF THE

TIP TOP WEEKLY

WE receive hundreds of letters every week from readers asking if we can supply the early numbers of Tip Top containing Frank's adventures. In every case we are obliged to reply that numbers 1 to 300 are entirely out of print. We would like to call the attention of our readers to the fact that the Frank Merriwell Stories now being published in book form in the Medal Library are inclusive of these early numbers. The first book to appear was No. 150 entitled "Frank Merriwell's Schooldays." We give herewith a complete list of all stories that have been published in book form up to the time of writing. We will be glad to send a fine colored catalogue of the Medal Library which is just filled with good things for boys, upon receipt of a one-cent stamp to cover postage.

MEDAL LIBRARY

No.
150—Frank Merriwell's Schooldays.
167—Frank Merriwell's Chums.
178—Frank Merriwell's Foes.
184—Frank Merriwell's Trip West.
189—Frank Merriwell Down South.
193—Frank Merriwell's Bravery.
197—Frank Merriwell's Hunting Tour.
201—Frank Merriwell in Europe.
205—Frank Merriwell at Yale.
209—Frank Merriwell's Sports Afield.
213—Frank Merriwell's Races.
217—Frank Merriwell's Bicycle Tour.
225—Frank Merriwell's Courage.
229—Frank Merriwell's Daring.
233—Frank Merriwell's Athletes.
237—Frank Merriwell's Skill.
240—Frank Merriwell's Champions.
244—Frank Merriwell's Return to Yale.
247—Frank Merriwell's Secret.
251—Frank Merriwell's Danger.
254—Frank Merriwell's Loyalty.
258—Frank Merriwell in Camp.
262—Frank Merriwell's Vacation.
267—Frank Merriwell's Cruise.

MEDAL LIBRARY

No.
271—Frank Merriwell's Chase.
276—Frank Merriwell in Maine.
280—Frank Merriwell's Struggle.
284—Frank Merriwell's First Job.
288—Frank Merriwell's Opportunity.
292—Frank Merriwell's Hard Luck.
296—Frank Merriwell's Protégé.
300—Frank Merriwell on the Road.
304—Frank Merriwell's Own Company.
308—Frank Merriwell's Fame.
312—Frank Merriwell's College Chums.
316—Frank Merriwell's Problem.
320—Frank Merriwell's Fortune.
324—Frank Merriwell's New Comedian.
328—Frank Merriwell's Prosperity.
332—Frank Merriwell's Stage Hit.
336—Frank Merriwell's Great Scheme.
340—Frank Merriwell in England.
344—Frank Merriwell on the Boulevards.
348—Frank Merriwell's Duel.
352—Frank Merriwell's Double Shot.
356—Frank Merriwell's Baseball Victories.
359—Frank Merriwell's Confidence.
362—Frank Merriwell's Auto.
365—Frank Merriwell's Fun.

The Price of the Merriwell Books is Ten Cents per Copy. At all Newsdealers

THE ROUGH RIDER WEEKLY

ISSUED EVERY MONDAY. **HANDSOME COLORED COVER**

Ted Strong wants to make your acquaintance, boys, and we are convinced that you will be proud to have him as a friend. The tales of his adventures among the cowboys are full of fascinating interest. He is known to every one as "King of the Wild West" and he upholds the title.

PRICE FIVE CENTS PER COPY

For sale by all newsdealers, or sent, by the publishers to any address upon receipt of price in money or postage stamps

HERE ARE THE LATEST TITLES:

94—King of the Wild West's Submarine; or, The Search for Sunken Treasure.
95—King of the Wild West's Finish; or, The Great Stone Door.
96—King of the Wild West's Peril; or, The Cannibals of Tiburon Island.
97—King of the Wild West's Strange Quest; or, The White Princess of Sonora.
98—King of the Wild West's Horsethief; or, The Enigma of Lost Springs.
99—King of the Wild West's Chase; or, The Rescue of Yuen Ho.
100—King of the Wild West's Meteor; or, The Race for the Klondike Diamond.
101—King of the Wild West in Siberia; or, Castaway on the Arctic Ocean.
102—King of the Wild West's Haunt; or, Stella's Escape from Sacrifice.
103—King of the Wild West's Dive; or, The Finding of the "Golden Baby."
104—King of the Wild West's Guard; or, Stella's Long Shot.
105—King of the Wild West's Posse; or, Stella's Own Vigilance Committee.
106—King of the Wild West Underground; or, Stella to the Rescue.
107—King of the Wild West's Brand; or, How Stella Held the Fort.
108—King of the Wild West's Campaign; or, How Stella Won the Victory.
109—King of the Wild West's Booty; or, Stella Finds the Pirate Loot.
110—King of the Wild West's Success; or, Stella and the Marked Bill.
111—King of the Wild West's Daring; or, Stella's Great Lariat Throw.
112—King of the Wild West's Key; or, Stella in the Hidden Vault.
113—King of the Wild West's "Hassayamper"; or, Stella in the Death Cavern.
114—King of the Wild West's Strength; or, Stella on the Cattle Ranch.
115—King of the Wild West's Danger; or, Stella among the Hopis.
116—King of the Wild West's Gulch Diggings; or, Stella's Star Rôle.
117—King of the Wild West's Motor-Car; or, Stella Fosdick's Peril.
118—King of the Wild West's Duty; or, Stella Cast Away in the Wilderness.
119—King of the Wild West's Wild-Goose Band; or, Stella's Long Flight.

IF YOU WANT ANY BACK NUMBERS of our libraries and cannot procure them from newsdealers, they can be obtained from this office direct. Cut out and fill in the following order blank and send it to us with the price of the books you want and we will send them to you by return mail. POSTAGE STAMPS TAKEN THE SAME AS MONEY.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City. ....., 190

Gentlemen:—Enclosed find.....cents for which please send me:

.....copies of TIP TOP	Nos.....	.....copies of BUFFALO BILL	Nos.....
..... " "NICK CARTER	Nos.....	..... " "BRAVE AND BOLD	Nos.....
..... " "DIAMOND DICK	Nos.....	..... " "ROUGH RIDER	Nos.....

Name.....Street and No.....Town.....State.....

DIAMOND DICK WEEKLY

ISSUED EVERY THURSDAY. **BEAUTIFUL COLORED COVERS**

Diamond Dick and his son, Bertie, are true men of the Western plains. They are noble-hearted fellows who don't impose on the weaker man and who don't let anyone else do it if they can help it.

You ought to read how they clean up a mining camp of the dishonest gamblers and other toughs who usually prey on the uneducated miners.

PRICE FIVE CENTS PER COPY

For sale by all newsdealers, or sent, by the publishers to any address upon receipt of price in money or postage stamps

HERE ARE THE LATEST TITLES:

486—Diamond Dick for the Flag; or, Holding His Own Under Old Glory.

487—Diamond Dick's Strange Debt; or, Keeping His Word with a Scoundrel.

488—Diamond Dick's Dumb Pard; or, The Ghost of Black Cañon.

489—Diamond Dick's Long Race; or, Neck and Neck for Big Stakes.

490—Diamond Dick in the Rapids; or, That Pale Man from Oregon.

491—Diamond Dick's Red Foe; or, The Renegade of the Cascades.

492—Diamond Dick's Secret Scent; or, The Doom of the Three Masked Men.

493—Diamond Dick's Master-Hand; or, The Battle of the Green-Eyed Demon.

494—Diamond Dick in the Breakers; or, The Life-Savers of Vancouver.

495—Diamond Dick's Lucky Ace; or, Turning the Trump in a Hard Game.

496—Diamond Dick's Death Chase; or, Running a Weasel to Earth.

497—Diamond Dick's Vampire Trail; or, The Mad Horseman of Thunder Mountain.

498—Diamond Dick On the Dead Line; or, A Close Call Among the Utes.

499—Diamond Dick's Lost Trail; or, A Queer Hunt in Oregon.

500—Diamond Dick's Midnight Duel; or, The Girl Bandit of Powder River.

501—Diamond Dick On His Nerve; or, The Oath of the Inner Circle.

502—Diamond Dick At the Wheel; or, A Race With Death on the Mississippi.

503—Diamond Dick's Show-Down; or, Calling a Bad Man's Bluff.

504—Diamond Dick's Strange Guest; or, The Outlaw Marksman of Arkansas.

505—Diamond Dick's Hit and Miss; or, The Man With Six Notches On His Gun.

506—Diamond Dick's Fight For a Girl; or, The Tenderfoot of Bellair Gulch.

507—Diamond Dick's Underground Trail; or, The Yellow Demon of the Sierras.

508—Diamond Dick's Cross-Counter; or, A Big Battle for the Belt.

509—Diamond Dick's Good Right Hand; or, A Dark Plot in Chinatown.

510—Diamond Dick's Bravery; or, The Three Amazons of the Mojave.

511—Diamond Dick's Double Trail; or, The Apparition of the Big Tree.

IF YOU WANT ANY BACK NUMBERS of our libraries and cannot procure them from newsdealers, they can be obtained from this office direct. Cut out and fill in the following order blank and send it to us with the price of the books you want and we will send them to you by return mail. **POSTAGE STAMPS TAKEN THE SAME AS MONEY.**

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City. 190

Gentlemen:—Enclosed find.....cents for which please send me:

.....copies of **TIP TOP** Nos..... .....copies of **BUFFALO BILL** Nos.....

..... " " **NICK CARTER** Nos..... ..... " " **BRAVE AND BOLD** Nos.....

..... " " **DIAMOND DICK** Nos..... ..... " " **ROUGH RIDER** Nos.....

Name.....Street and No.....Town.....State.....

The Nick Carter Weekly

ISSUED EVERY SATURDAY. HANDSOMEST COLORED COVERS

No other detective library contains stories that are half so interesting. Nick Carter has been all over the world and has had experience with all kinds of criminals.

That's why, boys, his adventures holds one's interest from cover to cover. There is no brutality in Nick's make-up—he does not need it—he uses his wits. Do not fail to get the latest number from your newsdealer.

PRICE FIVE CENTS PER COPY

For sale by all newsdealers, or sent, by the publishers to any address upon receipt of price in money or postage stamps

HERE ARE THE LATEST TITLES:

477—Captain Satan, the Unknown; or, Nick Carter's Great Mistake.
478—A Wizard of the Highway; or, Nick Carter's Test of Faith.
479—Abducted in Broad Day; or, Nick Carter's Duplicate Prisoner.
480—The Tong of the Tailless Dragon; or, Nick Carter's Close Shave.
481—The Padlocked Mystery; or, Nick Carter and the Death Plot Trap.
482—Dema, the Dangerous; or, Nick Carter's Chase to Paris.
483—Nick Carter's Murder Problem; or, A Hide-and-Seek Game with the Dead.
484—A Battle Among the Clouds; or, Nick Carter's Criminal Client.
485—The Veiled Princess; or, Nick Carter's Secret Accomplishment.
486—The Conquest of a Kingdom; or, Nick Carter's Fight for a Throne.
487—The House of Skeletons; or, Nick Carter's Greatest Find.
488—A Queen of Inferno; or, Nick Carter's Giant Foes.
489—Nick Carter's Foxy Adversary; or, The Lures of the Bird of Paradise.
490—Three Times In Peril; or, Nick Carter's Busiest Night.
491—The Gold Lettered Dagger; or, Nick Carter's Most Tragic Case.
492—That Mysterious Affair; or, Chick's Wonderful Twelve Hours Work.
493—A Dead Guardian of Millions; or, Nick Carter Uncovers a Mystery.
494—The Mysterious Treasure Hunters; or, Nick Carter's Bargain With a Crook.
495—The Klondike Bank Puzzle; or, Nick Carter's Narrow Escape.
496—The "Bad Man" of Nome; or, Nick Carter's Hunt in Alaska.
497—The Black Flag of Piracy; or, Nick Carter's Daring Rescue.
498—Following An Ocean Trail; or, Nick Carter's Chase After Pirates.
499—A Clue From the Clouds; or, Nick Carter's Mysterious Evidence.
500—Praxatel, of the Ironarm; or, Nick Carter Follows an Open Trail.
501—The Man From Montana; or, Nick Carter and the Cavern of Gold.
502—Ismalla, the Chieftain; or, Nick Carter Among the Barbarians.

IF YOU WANT ANY BACK NUMBERS of our libraries and cannot procure them from newsdealers, they can be obtained from this office direct. Cut out and fill in the following order blank and send it to us with the price of the books you want and we will send them to you by return mail. POSTAGE STAMPS TAKEN THE SAME AS MONEY.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City. 190

Gentlemen:—Enclosed find.....cents for which please send me:

.....copies of TIP TOP	Nos.....	.....copies of BUFFALO BILL	Nos.....
..... " " NICK CARTER	Nos.....	..... " " BRAVE AND BOLD	Nos.....
..... " " DIAMOND DICK	Nos.....	..... " " ROUGH RIDER	Nos.....

Name.....Street and No.....Town.....State.....

A GRAND IDEA

THE old popular favorite, Frank Merriwell, has signalized his triumphant return to the pages of TIP TOP, beginning with No. 512, by opening a novel

SCHOOL OF ATHLETIC DEVELOPMENT

where he has put into practice some clever schemes long entertained, with the idea of building up the constitutions of backward lads. Here, there has naturally opened up a glorious opportunity for meeting new characters; while the strange adventures and thrilling situations connected with up-to-date American sports are handled as only Frank Merriwell knows how.

The famous TIP TOP promises great things from this time on to its world-wide circle of admirers, and with this novel field open to such a talented pen, you may rest assured, boys, Burt L. Standish will spread such a feast before you as has never before been dreamed of.

Tell all your young friends that Frank has come back to his own, better equipped than ever to arouse the interest and enthusiam of his vast army of boy admirers. Consult the catalogue below for titles.

519—Frank Merriwell's Mode; or, Winning the Confidence of a Wild Lad.
520—Frank Merriwell's Aids; or, "The Secret Order of Scalp Lifters."
521—Dick Merriwell's Visit; or, Hot Times at Farnham Hall.
522—Dick Merriwell's Retaliation; or, Fardale Against Farnham Hall.
523—Dick Merriwell's Rival; or, Dale Sparkfair at Fardale.
524—Frank Merriwell's Young Crew; or, The Mystery of the Boat House.
525—Frank Merriwell's Fast Nine; or, Champions of the County.
526—Frank Merriwell's Athletic Field; or, The Great Meet at Bloomfield.
527—Dick Merriwell's Reprisal; or, The Clash of the Champions.
528—Dick Merriwell Dared; or, The Grapple at Wellsburg.
529—Dick Merriwell's Dismay; or, The Departure of June.
530—Frank Merriwell's Son; or, The Mark of the Star.
531—Frank Merriwell's Old Flock; or, The Reunion at Merry House.
532—Frank Merriwell's House Party; or, The Rustle With the Rovers.
533—Dick Merriwell's Summer Team; or, Baseball in the Blue Hills.
534—Dick Merriwell's Demand; or, The Draw at Madawaska.
535—Dick Merriwell's Slabmate; or, The Boy from Bloomfield.
536—Frank Merriwell's Summer Camp; or, The Athletic School in the Woods.
537—Frank Merriwell's Proposal; or, Starting the Sport in the League.

Price, Five Cents.

For sale by all newsdealers, or sent postpaid by the publishers upon receipt of price.

STREET & SMITH, *Publishers,* **NEW YORK**

THE FAVORITE LIST
OF FIVE-CENT LIBRARIES

NICK CARTER WEEKLY

We know, boys, that there is no need of introducing to you Nicholas Carter, the greatest sleuth that ever lived. Every number containing the adventures of Nick Carter has a peculiar, but delightful, power of fascination.

MIGHT AND MAIN

These are stories of the adventures of boys who succeeded in climbing the ladder of fame by honest effort. No more interesting tales can be imagined. Each number is at least one-third longer than the ordinary five-cent library.

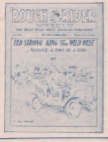
BUFFALO BILL STORIES

Buffalo Bill is the hero of a thousand exciting adventures among the Redskins. These are given to our boys only in the Buffalo Bill Stories. They are bound to interest and please you.

BRAVE AND BOLD

Every boy who prefers variety in his reading matter, ought to be a reader of Brave and Bold. All these were written by authors who are past masters in the art of telling boys' stories. Every tale is complete in itself.

DIAMOND DICK WEEKLY

The demand for stirring stories of Western adventure is admirably filled by this library. Every up-to-date boy ought to read just how law and order are established and maintained on our Western plains by Diamond Dick, Bertie, and Handsome Harry.

ROUGH RIDER WEEKLY

Ted Strong was appointed deputy marshal by accident, but he resolves to use his authority and rid his ranch of some very tough bullies. He does it in such a slick way that everyone calls him "King of the Wild West" and he certainly deserves his title.

BOWERY BOY LIBRARY

The adventures of a poor waif whose only name is "Bowery Billy." Billy is the true product of the streets of New York. No boy can read the tales of his trials without imbibing some of that resource and courage that makes the character of this homeless boy stand out so prominently.

THE TIP TOP WEEKLY

Boys, Frank Merriwell has opened a school of physical development. He has gathered all of his old-time comrades about him and their adventures are wonderfully interesting. These are certainly the best tales of athletic adventure.